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TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

**PROGRAMA INTERNACIONAL DEL DOBLE GRADO
EN ADMINISTRACIÓN Y DIRECCIÓN DE EMPRESAS Y
ECONOMÍA**

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE REFUGEE
CRISIS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EUROPE'S
ROLE IN ITS MANAGEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the main socio-economic aspects of the refugee crisis that is taking place nowadays in the European Union. It is not only a descriptive analysis of the main events that have been occurring in the past years but also a critical evaluation of Europe's management of this crisis.

Along this paper, data about the dimension of this crisis will be shown, as well as a demonstration of the fact that the main cause of this wave of people coming to Europe are not economic reasons but fleeing from armed conflicts and wars. Thus, those people are not economic migrants but refugees.

Moreover, the main actions taken by the European Union and the Member States will be explained, showing the main weaknesses of this Union and also suggesting some possible durable solutions as well as the positive effects that this crisis can have for the European Union.

*I would like to point out that this is an on-going conflict and that it is impossible to include updated information till the last day. Last information included corresponds to January 2016.

KEY WORDS

Refugees, Immigration, Crisis, European Union

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration among countries and continents has been increasing over the years and this trend seems to remain as world population is expected to increase, especially in the world areas considered the main senders of emigrants.

According to the United Nations data, in 2013, the number of migrants in the world was 232 million (Table 1), and the numbers have increased during 2014 and 2015.

In the last years, the main migrant senders have been Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, the poorest regions of the world, which are precisely the regions, which expect to increase their population dramatically in the next years. (Table 2)

Table 1: International migrant stock (millions)

	1990	2000	2010	2013
World	154.2	174.5	220.7	231.5
Developed regions	82.3	103.4	129.7	135.6
Developing regions	71.9	71.1	91	95.9
Africa	15.6	15.6	17.1	18.6
Asia	49.9	50.4	67.8	70.8
Europe	49	56.2	69.2	72.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	7.1	6.5	8.1	8.5
Northern America	27.8	40.4	51.2	53.1
Oceania	4.7	5.4	7.3	7.9

Source: United Nations (2013), Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision. Available at: <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/documents/worldmigration/2013/Chapter1.pdf>

Table 2: Population of the World and major areas 2015, 2030, 2050 and 2100 according to the medium-variant projection

Major area	Population (millions)			
	2015	2030	2050	2100
World	7,349	8,501	9,725	11,213
Africa	1,186	1,679	2,478	4,387
Asia	4,393	4,923	5,267	4,889
Europe	738	734	707	646
Latin America and the Caribbean	634	721	784	721
Northern America	358	396	433	500
Oceania	39	47	57	71

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, New York. Available at: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/key_findings_wpp_2015.pdf

It is needed to differentiate two kinds of migrants: internal and international migrants. It is true that most migrants are internal, this is, regional movements within countries. As it is

stated in the Human Development Research Paper “Cross-National Comparisons of Internal Migration” by Bell and Muhidin (2009): “Internal migration is the most significant process driving changes in the pattern of human settlement across much of the world”. In fact, this report shows that internal movements in the most populated countries of the world are quite substantial, stating that 78 million of people in the USA, 77 million in India and 73 million in China live outside their state or province.¹ However, this paper will focus on international migrants and more precisely in the migration crisis that the European Union is suffering nowadays, with the massive entrance of migrants through the Mediterranean coming from Africa and Asia.

The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights defines “international migrant” as “persons who are outside the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens, are not subject to its legal protection and are in the territory of another State”.²

Thus, in this broad definition, would be included two types of people who leave their country:

- On the one hand, the economic migrants, who have decided to leave their country looking for a better life and better economic conditions and can freely, go back to their countries.
- On the other hand, refugees, who are forced to leave their countries escaping from war or persecution looking for a safe place to live. The Refugee Convention of 1951 is a legal text that protects them, stating that they have the right to not be immediately deported to their home country and that they have the right to asylum in safe conditions.

The starting hypothesis of this research is that the income gap among countries may be one of the causes of the migration crisis that the European Union is living nowadays, as it is explained in Point 3.1. However, after analysing some data, it is found that this is not the main cause and other factors that trigger international migration are analysed in Point 3.2,

¹ Bell M. And Muhidin S. (2009), United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Research Paper. “Cross-National Comparisons of Internal Migration”. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdrp_2009_30.pdf

² Pizarro G. (9th August 2002) Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights in A/57/292, Human Rights of migrants, Note by the Secretary-General. Available at: https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/policy_and_research/un/57/A_57_292_en.pdf

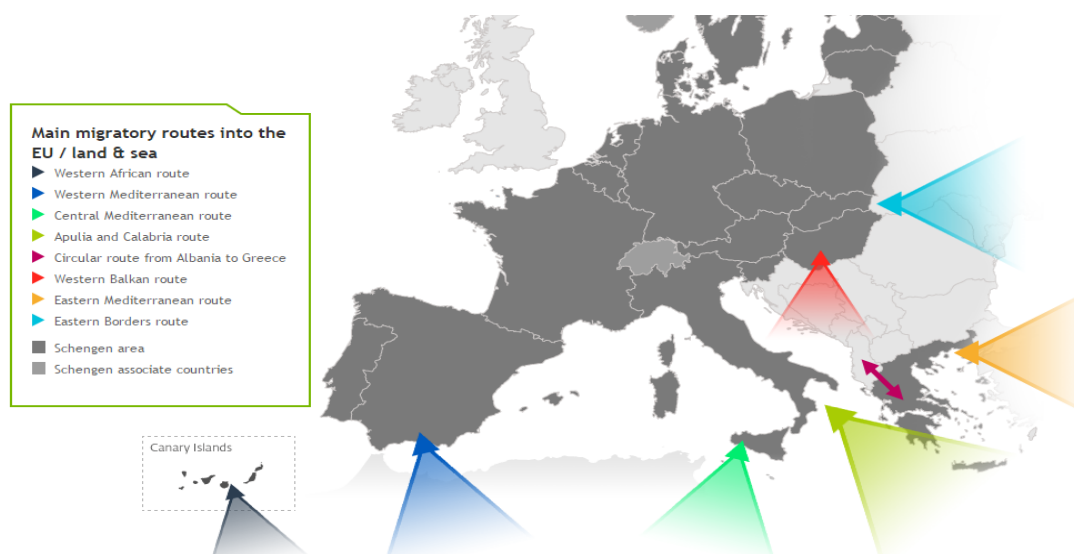
showing that today's migratory crisis in Europe should be better named refugee crisis, as this huge wave of people contains mainly people escaping from armed conflict.

2. MIGRATORY CRISIS IN EUROPE

2.1. Illegal migration dimension in the Mediterranean

The migratory flows coming along the Mediterranean have become the gravest migratory crisis since the II World War. In the last few years, especially during 2014 and 2015, the illegal border crossings through the Mediterranean Sea have increased dramatically, leading to millions of deaths. Figure 1 shows the main routes used to enter the EU.

Figure 1: Main migration routes into the EU



Source: FRONTEX. Available at: <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/migratory-routes-map/>

All these routes are used to illegally arrive to the EU, but the crisis is especially in the Western Mediterranean route, the Central Mediterranean route and the Eastern Mediterranean route. As explained by Frontex, the Western Mediterranean route refers to the sea journey from North Africa to the Iberian Peninsula and the land passage to Ceuta and Melilla. This route accounts for 9,220 illegal border crossings between January and August 2015. According to Frontex, the top three nationalities of migrants via this route during those months have been Syria, Guinea and Algeria.

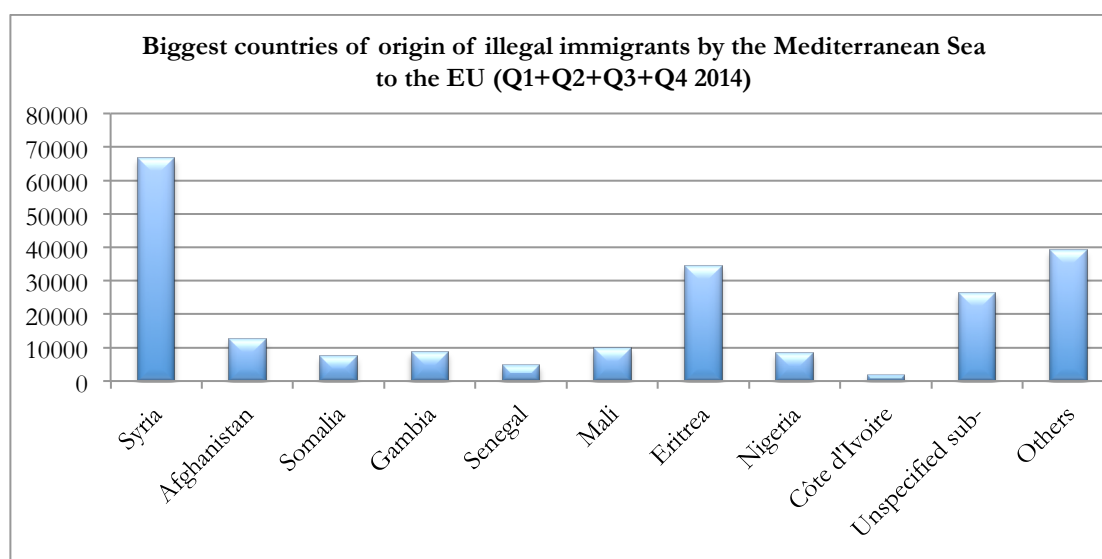
Secondly, the Central Mediterranean route is defined as the migratory flows by sea from North Africa to Italy and Malta, accounting for 128,619 illegal border crossings from January to September 2015. The top three nationalities of migrants using this route during those months have been Eritrea, Nigeria and unspecified Sub-Saharan nationals.

Thirdly, the Eastern Mediterranean is defined by Frontex as the crossing to the European Union through Turkey via Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria. This route has been the one with the highest amount of crossings: up to 359,171 illegal border crossings between January and September 2015, being the top three nationalities using this route Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Finally, it has to be said that as the crisis has become graver and graver, a fourth route has become quite important too: the Western Balkan route. This route includes according to Frontex, secondary movements of people coming from Asia who have entered through Greece and Turkey and then have continued through the Western Balkans into Hungary.

Talking more globally about all the possible routes, Frontex data shows that during 2014, the top 3 countries of origin by the Mediterranean Sea were Syria, Eritrea and unspecified Sub-Saharan nationals, followed by Afghanistan.

Graph 1: Biggest countries of origin of illegal immigrants by the Mediterranean Sea to the EU

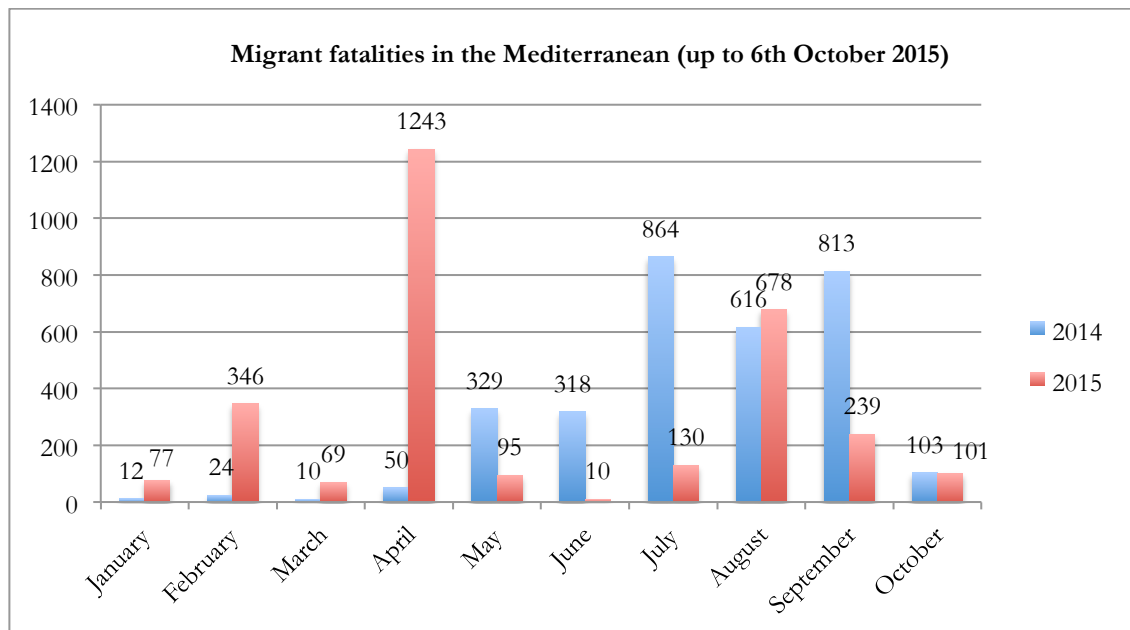


Own elaboration. Source: FRONTEX (2015). "Frontex Risk Analysis Network quarterly report" FRAN quarterly. Quarter 1. Available at: http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Fran_Q1_2015.pdf

This illegal crossing of the Mediterranean Sea is the cheapest, or sometimes the only way they have to arrive to the EU. One of the most common journeys consists of a land trip to Libya from the different countries and then, once in Libya, the traffickers get around 200 people together in small boats. The traffickers remove all the cell phones to the migrants and give them a GPS and a phone with the number of the coastguards. Usually the traffickers do not give enough petrol for the whole journey, something that makes the

journey even riskier.³ However, for most of the migrants, it is worth to spend around 2000 euros trying to cross the sea and with a high possibility of dying, rather than staying at their home country. This way of crossing the sea has always been used by migrants; however, during 2015 the number of illegal crossings has increased a lot leading to a high increase in deaths as we can see in Graph 2, up to 6th October 2015.

Graph 2: Migrant fatalities in the Mediterranean



Own elaboration. Data source: International Organization for Migration (6th October 2015), Mediterranean update. Available at: <http://missingmigrants.iom.int/infographics>

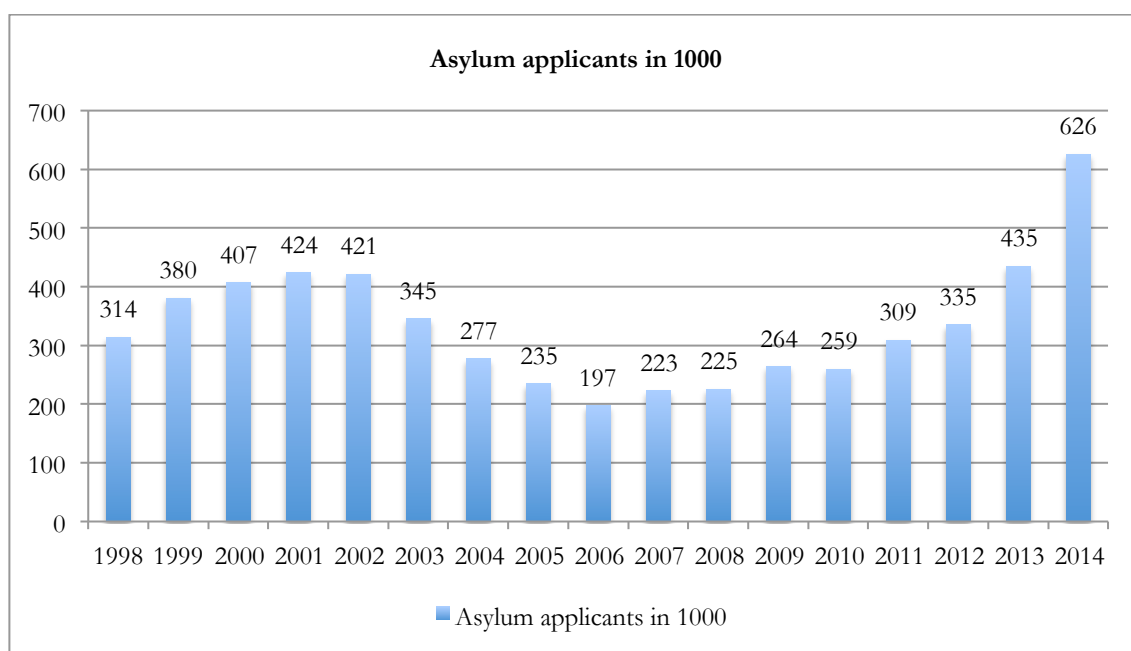
2.2. Movements inside Europe

Once they arrive to Europe, most of the people do not want to stay in Italy, Spain or Greece since they know that there are not as many economic and labour opportunities as in other countries such as Germany and Sweden.

Asylum applications have been increasing steadily since 2008. Graph 3 shows the situation till 2014, year in which the applications increased sharply due to the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine and the situation in Eritrea mainly.

³ Libia, víctima del sueño europeo (16th May 2015). El País. Available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/05/16/actualidad/1431800961_165538.html

Graph 3: Asylum applicants in 1000 in the last 15 years

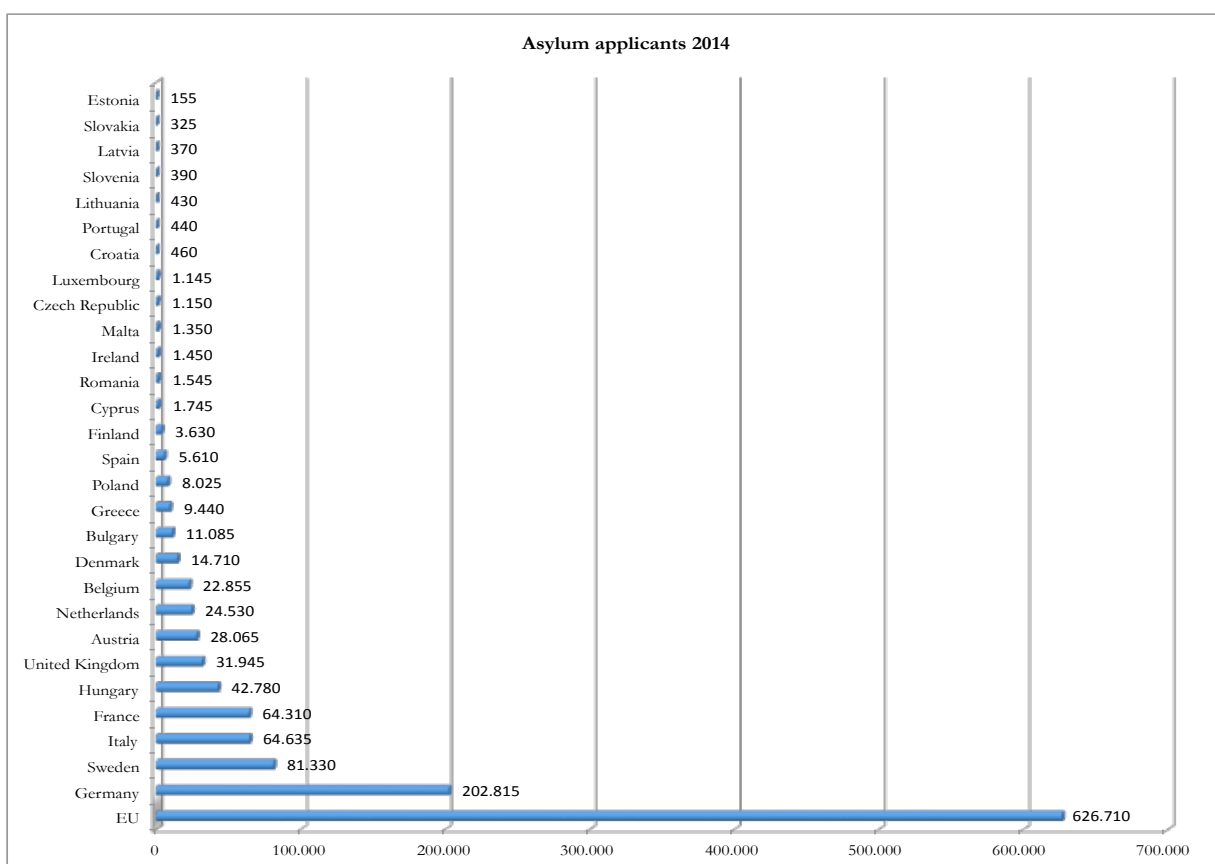


Own elaboration. Data source: European Parliament (March 2015). Asylum in the EU: Facts and Figures.
Available at:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551332/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)551332_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/551332/EPRS_BRI(2015)551332_EN.pdf)

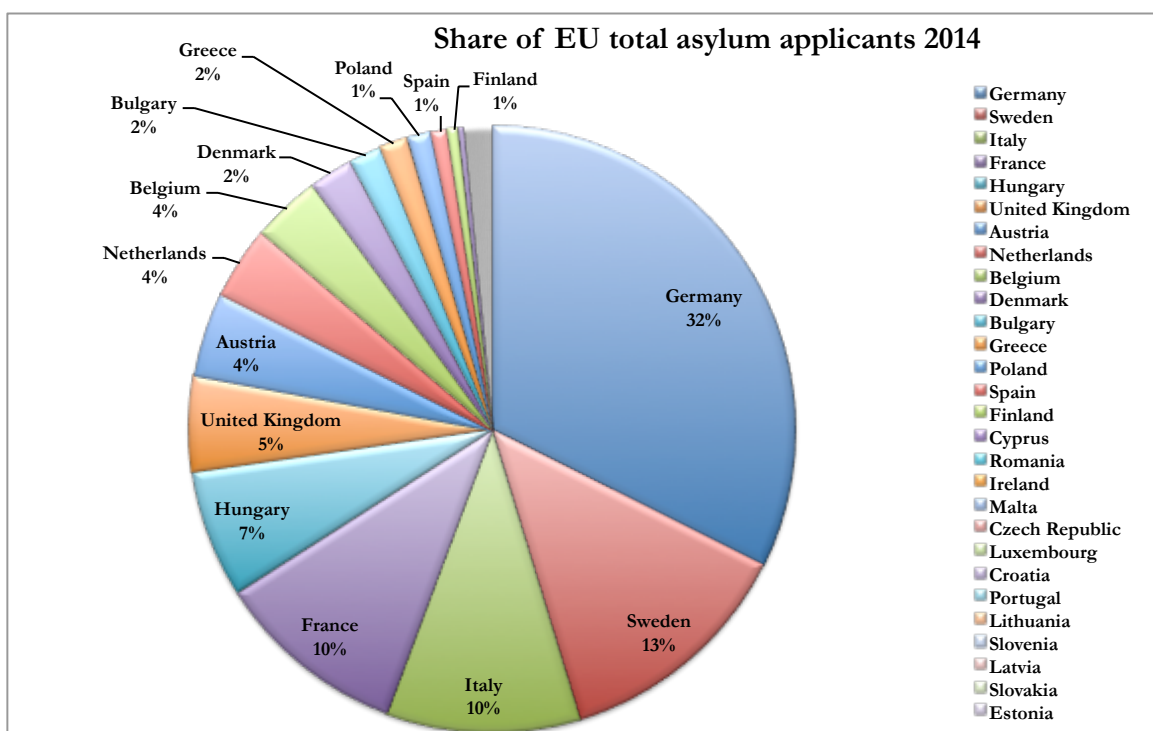
As we can see in graphs 4 and 5, those 626,000 total asylum applications in 2014 are very unevenly distributed among Member States, being Germany the country receiving the major number of applications (202,815 in 2014, which represents the 32% of total European applications), being followed by Sweden with a much lower number (81,330 in 2014, representing the 13% of total European applications).

Graph 4: Distribution of asylum applicants by country in 2014



Own elaboration. Data source: Eurostat

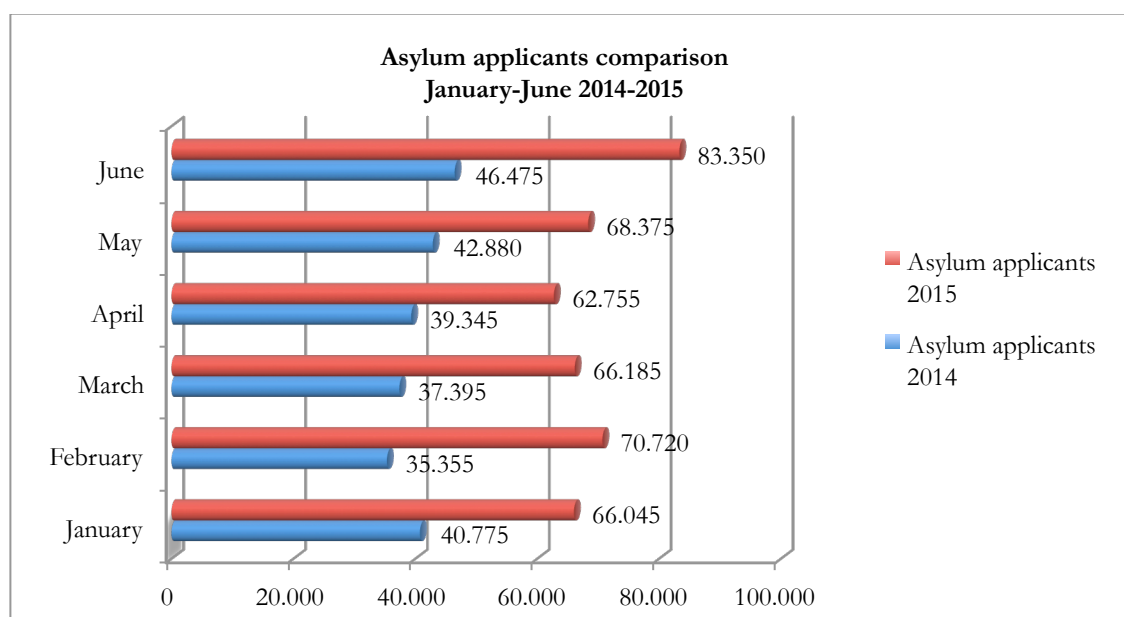
Graph 5: Share of asylum applications accounted by each country (2014)



Own elaboration. Data source: Eurostat.

If the data of 2014 is overwhelming, 2015 is much worse. Making a comparison of the six first months of 2014 and 2015 we can realise that this situation is far from stopping. In fact, the numbers are more and more alarming each day it goes by. As it can be seen in Graph 6, each month the asylum applications in 2015 doubled the applications in 2014, observing the highest number in June since the beginning of the year. This is related to weather conditions: as summer starts and the sea is more calmed, more people feel encourage to crossing the Mediterranean. As a consequence, more people arrive and more asylum applications are received.

Graph 6: Asylum applicants in Europe. Comparison January-June 2014/2015



Own elaboration. Data source: Eurostat.

3. MAIN FACTORS CAUSING MIGRATION (MEDITERRANEAN EXAMPLE)

3.1. GDP differential

According to Alonso (2011), one of the main reasons of migration is the income differential that exists among countries.⁴ In this section, the income differential between North Mediterranean countries and South Mediterranean countries will be analysed more specifically in order to see if this is one of the reasons, which is causing the current migratory wave from Africa/Asia to the European Union. It has to be taken into account that in my analysis, North Mediterranean countries include Spain, Italy and Greece, while South Mediterranean countries include Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

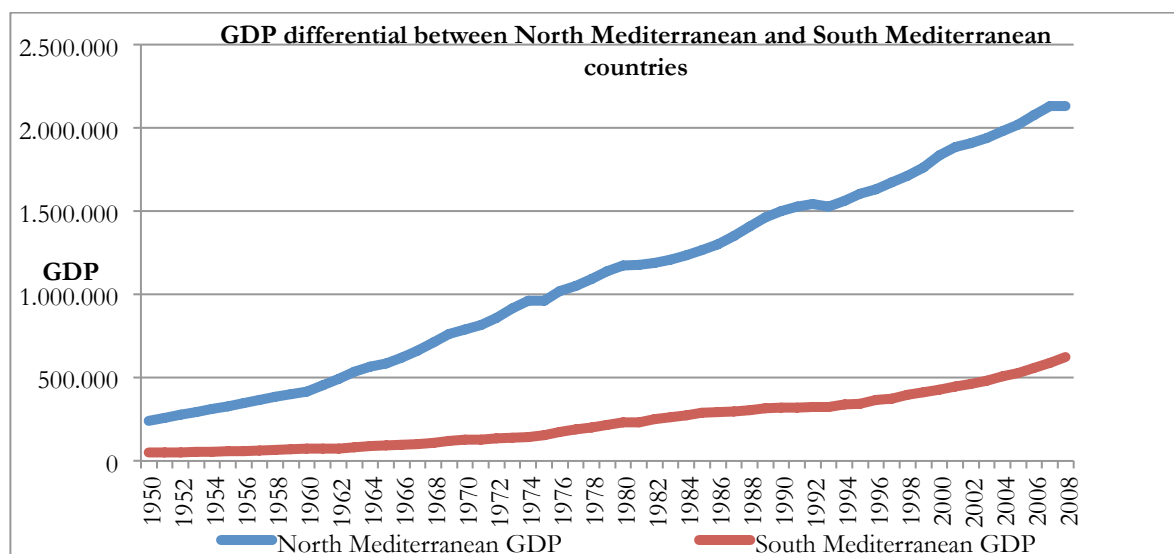
⁴ Alonso J.A. (June 2011). Migración internacional y desarrollo: una revisión a la luz de la crisis. CDP Background Paper No. 11. Available at: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/cdp_background_papers/bp2011_11.pdf

I have chosen these countries because they are the ones which are in the northern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean and I thought it would be very interesting to see how countries which are very close in distance (for example from Algeciras, Spain to Tangier, Morocco there are only around 50 km), are very far in terms of GDP. In order to construct the indicator, I have taken data of each of the countries firstly between the years 1950-2008 and secondly between 1990 and 2013, considering different variables (GDP, population and GDPpc).

Looking at Graph 7, which has been constructed summing the GDP level of the countries of each region for each year between 1950 and 2008, we can see that the GDP differential between both groups of countries from 1950 to 2008 has had a significant increase.⁵ As in the fifties this gap is not so big, for example in 1950 the income gap was of \$191,109 million, we see a clear increase as the development of the European Union progresses over the years, and Greece, in 1981, and Spain, in 1986, enter in the Community. The countries of the North Mediterranean have been industrialized and developed during the 20th and 21st centuries, while the North African countries have not experienced substantial changes, leading to an increase in the income differential. In the last year of analysis (2008), the differential is \$1,506,897 million. Thus, between 1950 and 2008 the income differential has increased a 688.5%. So looking at this graph, we could say that this increase in the income differential can be one of the reasons of the incredible rise in the movement of people from the South to the North Mediterranean in the last years.

⁵ North Mediterranean includes Spain, Italy and Greece. South Mediterranean includes Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

Graph 7: GDP differential between North Mediterranean and South Mediterranean countries (1950-2008)

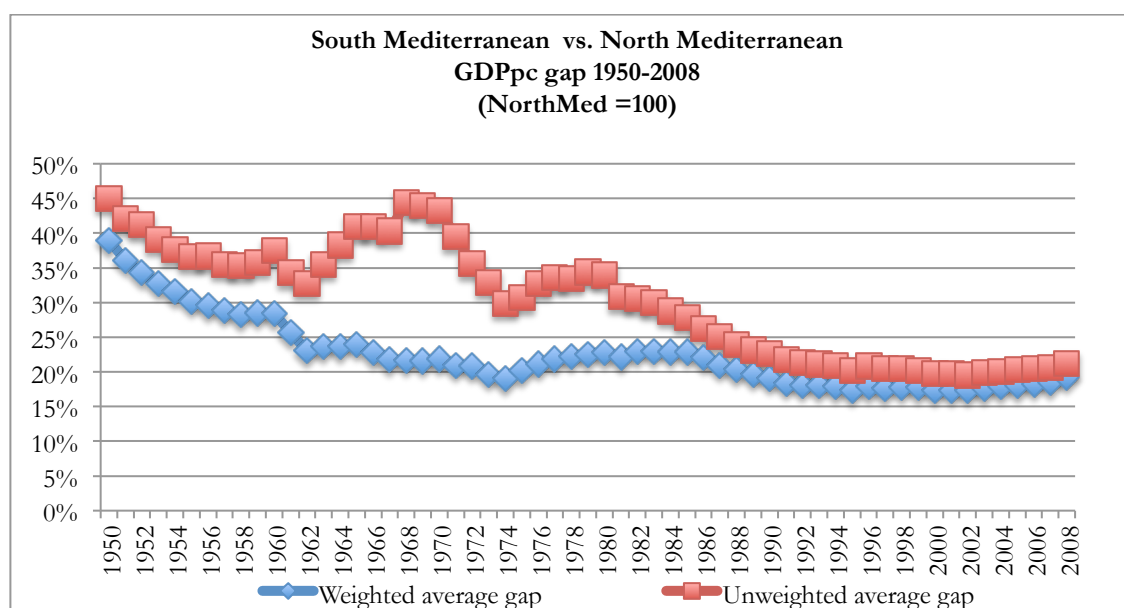


Own elaboration. Data source: Angus Madison (2008). Historical Statistics of the World Economy.

Doing a convergence exercise in order to see which percentage of the North Mediterranean GDPpc is represented by the South Mediterranean GDPpc, the conclusions from the previous graph are confirmed: a clear decline of the weight of South Mediterranean GDPpc with respect to North Mediterranean GDPpc is seen during the period 1950-2008 (Graph 8).

Both the weighted average (taking into account that the weight of a country is smaller than the weight of others because it has a lower population) and the unweighted average (without taking into account the different weight of each country) show the same tendency: While in 1950 the income per capita in the South was the 40% of the North, along the years, the distance has been increasing and in 2008 the income per capita of the South was just around the 20% of the income per capita of the North Mediterranean.

Graph 8: South Mediterranean vs. North Mediterranean GDPpc gap (1950-2008)



Own elaboration. Data source: Angus Madison (2008). Historical Statistics of the World Economy.

However, in both graphs (Graph 7 and Graph 8) a smooth change in the tendency was appreciated around the year 2006, so I decided to take more updated data from the World Bank in order to confirm this tendency. In Graph 9, we see clearly that in the last years, starting around 2006, the tendency started to change, being observed a clear increase of South Mediterranean GDPpc with respect to North Mediterranean GDPpc. Thus, although when I started this research I thought that one of the main reasons of the huge flows of migrants from Africa/Asia to Europe in these past few years was the income gap, as I arrive to this point the data shows something different. The World Bank data points out that due to the economic crisis suffered by the North Mediterranean countries, the distance in terms of GDPpc between both sides of the Mediterranean would have decreased during the past 6 years: the weighted average data shows that in 2008 the GDPpc differential was of \$34,279.7 millions, while in 2013 this differential was only of \$27,923.45 millions, leading to a 18.54% decrease in income differential between both regions of countries.

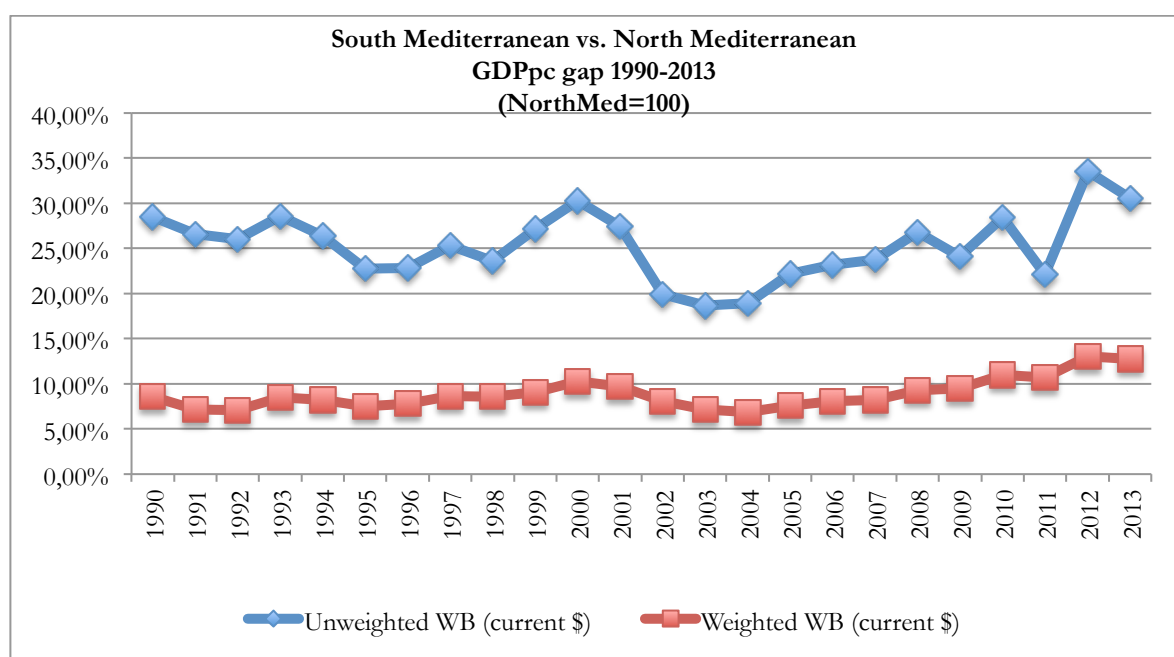
This begs the question, then, of why the flow of migrants has increased in these past 6 years. There may be two possible answers:

First of all, there seems to be a downward convergence. This is, the gap has been reduced not because the South Mediterranean countries have improved but because the economic situation in the North Mediterranean has become worse. Thus, although the gap is lower,

they still have an incentive to come here, because the economic situation is still better than the one they have in their countries.

Secondly, at this point, we need to take into account other factors different from income. This migration flow may not be explained mainly due to an economic phenomenon but to other social and religious problems that these past years have arisen, such as the Civil War in Syria, the progress of the DAESH and the oppression the people of these countries are living. These aspects are analyzed in the following part, as another cause of migration.

Graph 9: South Mediterranean vs. North Mediterranean GDPpc gap (1990-2013)



Own elaboration. Data source: World Bank.

3.2. Armed conflicts and wars

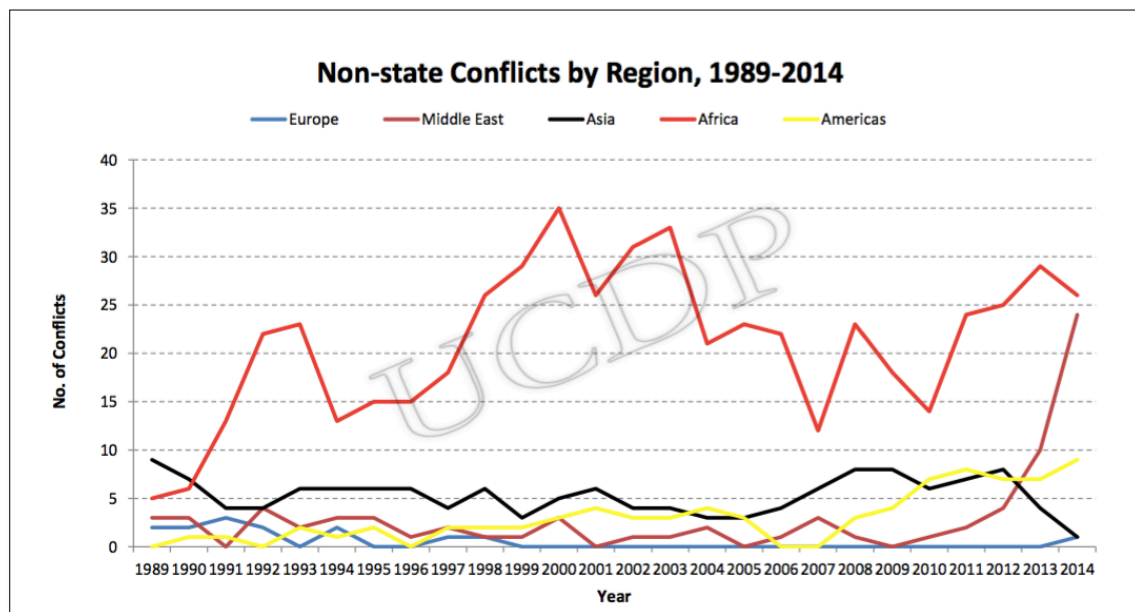
According to the assessment “Organized Violence in the World 2015”⁶, published by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program of the Uppsala University, “over 100,000 people were killed in organized violence in 2014, which is the highest fatality count in twenty years”. Moreover, this report states that the Middle East is the most violent region, being Syria and Iraq the main responsible for this situation.

⁶ Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2015), Organized Violence in the World 2015. Available at: http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1ucdp-paper-9.pdf

Graph 10, shows clearly the huge increase of non-state conflicts⁷ in the Middle East in the last years, as well as the high level of conflicts in Africa, being the region with the highest number of conflicts.

So looking at this graph, we can understand why so many people from these two regions of the world are crossing the Mediterranean to arrive to Europe.

Graph 10: Non-State conflicts by region, 1989-2014 according to Uppsala Conflict Data Program



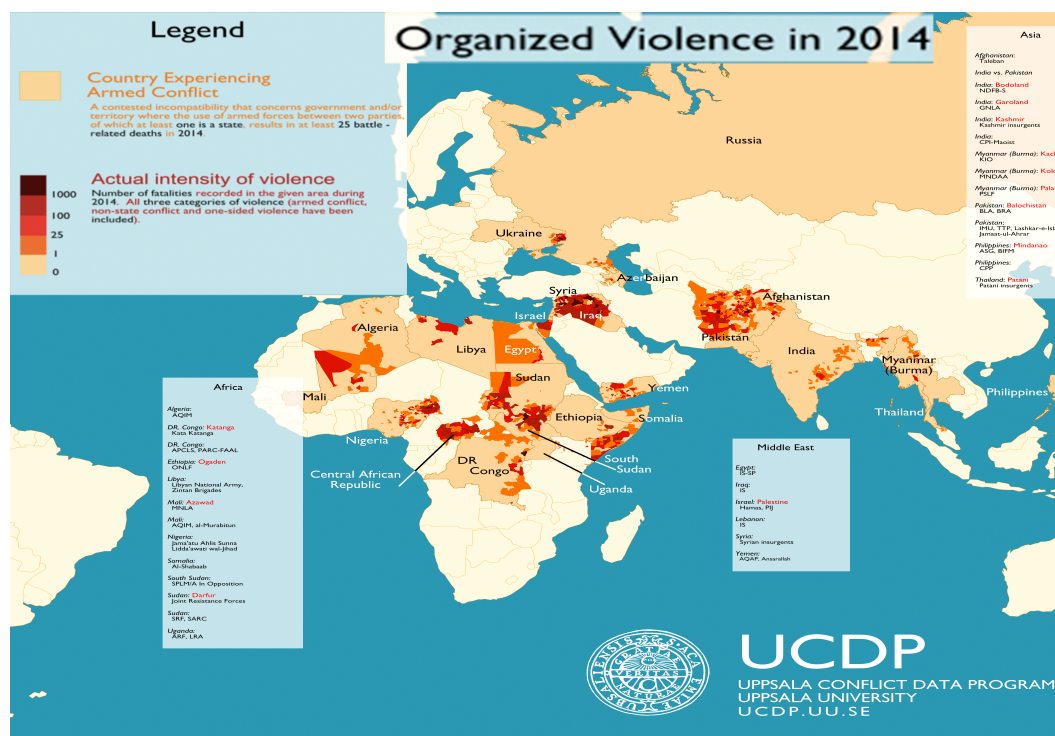
Data source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (2015). Non-state Conflict Dataset v. 2.5:1989-2014.

Available at: http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/66/66314_1non-state-conflicts-by-region-1989-2014.pdf

Figure 2 also helps us to see the amount of organized violence that is taking place all around the Mediterranean Sea. It seems clear that most of the countries in the South Mediterranean are experiencing armed conflicts and in many regions the intensity of violence is quite high. So as I arrive to this point of my research, I can confirm that it is armed conflict and not income gap what is generating the massive wave of people coming to the European Union and thus, they are not economic migrants, but refugees.

⁷ Non-State conflict is defined by the UCDP as the use of armed force between two organised armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, which results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year. One example is the conflict between the Islamic State (IS) and the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria.

Figure 2: Organized Violence in 2014 according to UCPD



Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (2015). Available at:

http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/charts_and_graphs/#map

As it has been shown in Graph 1, the highest number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean nowadays comes from Syria. This country is living since 2011 a Civil War and is also suffering the subjection of the Islamic State, which is causing thousands of deaths, displaces and refugees in its neighbour countries and Europe. People are trying to escape from war and destruction, knowing that probably they will not be able to go back home in many years.

According to the UNHCR, “global forced displacement reached in 2014 unprecedented levels” and the war in Syria was an important contributor to these numbers. At the end of 2014, “around 7.6 million Syrians were displaced within their country and Syria became the world’s largest source country of refugees in the world”.⁸ But the question now is: why are they coming to Europe instead of going to their neighbour countries? Basically, because their neighbour countries cannot accept more people and they have closed their borders.

Turkey has become the main receptor of Syrian refugees, having a total of 1,938,999 at September 4, 2015. It is followed by Lebanon with 1,172,753 Syrian refugees and Jordan with 629,245 Syrian refugees. This amount only accounts for a 2.3% of Turkish population.

⁸ UNHCR (2015). World at War: Global trends. Forced displacement in 2014. Available at: <http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html>

however, for Jordan and Lebanon it means a higher effort: Syrian refugees are 9.4% of Jordan inhabitants while in Lebanon are a 27.9%.⁹ This situation is unsustainable for these countries taking into account that according to OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), only the 30% of the humanitarian aid has been funded at date of 18th August 2015. As a consequence, the amount of Syrians crossing the Mediterranean to go to Europe has increased dramatically during 2014 and 2015 because they do not want to stay in Syria and they do not have the option to stay in their neighbour countries.

This example can be extended to countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, which are living similar conflicts, which are forcing their inhabitants to leave their countries.

4. EUROPE'S ROLE

4.1. Official line- Brussels actions

Due to the increasing migratory pressure in Europe during the last years, the European Council and the Council of Europe have been working during 2013, 2014 and 2015 to improve the response to this crisis. Many advances have been achieved, but there are still many things to do since the migratory flows do not stop and it is difficult to forecast how many more people will arrive.

2015 has been the worst year until now, and after the tragedies that took place in April 2015 (700 migrants died in the Mediterranean in just one day), the EU heads of state and government focus their efforts in four areas:¹⁰

- Strengthening presence at sea
- Fighting traffickers
- Preventing illegal migratory flows
- Reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility

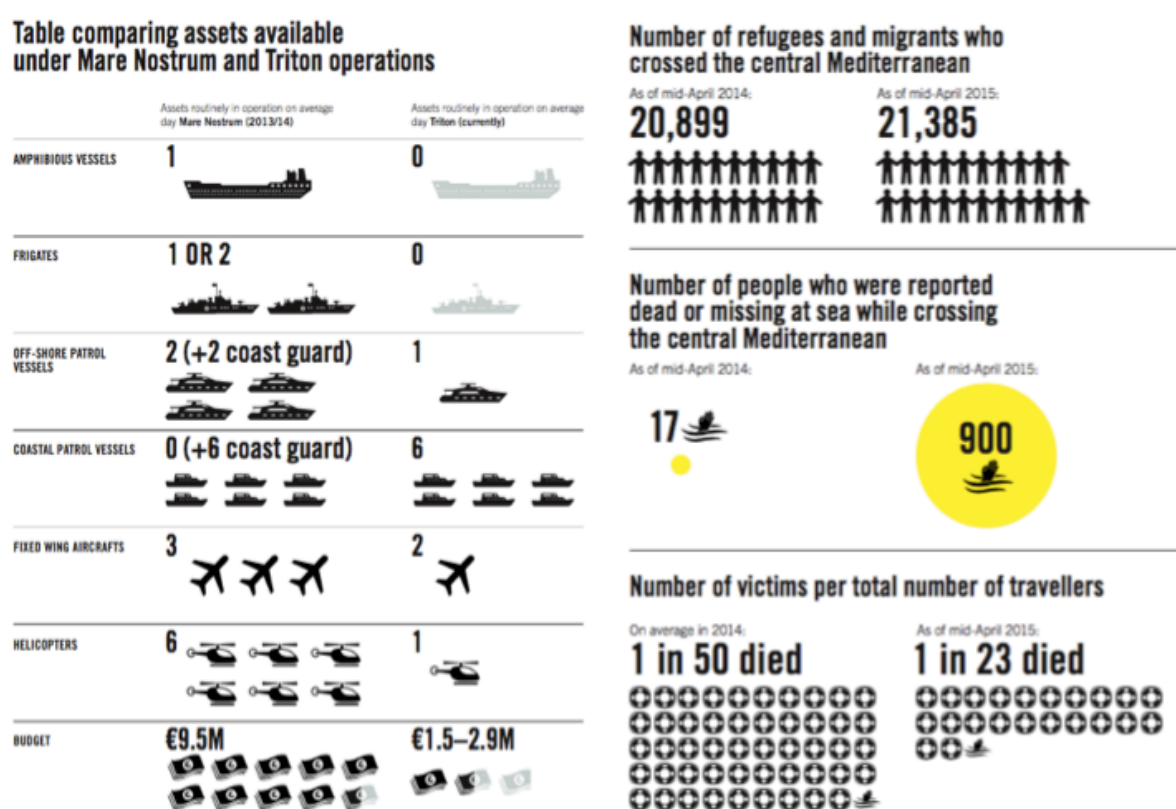
Let's analyse if this theory has been put into practice. First of all, regarding the presence at sea, it could be said that the decision taken at the beginning of this crisis worsened the situation. At the end of 2014, Mare Nostrum operation, which was a naval and air rescue operation of the Italian government to confront the wave of migrants to its coasts, came to

⁹ UNHCR (2016). Syria Regional Refugee Response. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

¹⁰ European Council (23rd April 2015). Special meeting of the European Council. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/23-special-euco-statement/>

an end because Member States thought it was not having the expected results and was too expensive (€9 million per month). As a consequence, they decided to substitute it by another operation called Triton, which was managed by Frontex, the EU border security agency. However, this new operation was even less effective than Mare Nostrum. According to Amnesty International, as it can be seen in Figure 3, Triton had, at the beginning, a much lower budget and fewer and smaller rescue equipment. Consequently, the number of people rescued was much lower.

Figure 3: Mare Nostrum vs. Triton according to Amnesty International



Source: Amnesty International (2015). Europe's sinking shame. The failure to save refugee and migrants at sea. Available at: https://doc.es.amnesty.org/cgi-bin/ai/BRSCGI/EUR03143415-26032_Europe%20Sinking%20Shame_Full%20Version?CMD=VEROBJ&MLKOB=33237320303

This reflects the first failure of the European authorities in handling the refugee arrivals. The reasons that the authorities gave for the substitution of Mare Nostrum by Triton were firstly, that Mare Nostrum was using military vessels and that was not appropriate for rescue operations and secondly, that the budget was too high.

Thus, what we can conclude from here is that the priorities, at least at the beginning of this refugee crisis, and probably because they were not realizing how grave the situation was, were not saving as many lives as possible but saving as much money as possible while trying to save some lives.

However, as 2015 started and each month the situation was becoming even worse, EU ministers had to take new actions regarding this operation. Finally, it was in April 2015, after the tragedy mentioned some paragraphs above, when the authorities reacted and at a special meeting on migration on 23rd April 2015, they agreed to triple the budget of Operation Triton for the years 2015-2016. Moreover, parallel to Triton, which is mainly focused on the Italian coasts, there is another operation called Poseidon that was launched to protect the Greek coasts that has also been reinforced with a higher budget in the last months.

Despite all these efforts during 2015 to strengthen those operations, the deaths in the Mediterranean have continued and Frontex, the EU border security agency, has felt overwhelmed because its resources and its power are not enough to handle the situation. So for this reason, one of the latest proposals of the European Commission (the 15th December 2015)¹¹ has been to establish a European Border and Coast Guard that will have more resources and will have the task of mobilizing 1,500 European coastguards in less than 72 hours to support the Member States when an emergency is taking place. This last decision has not been well accepted by many Member States, which are not willing to accept the impositions of the European Commission of collaborating with the necessary resources and agents whenever Brussels asks them to do so.

Concerning the points of fighting traffickers and preventing illegal migratory flows, the EU counts with official tools such as the Stockholm Programme¹² that was adopted in 2009 initially for the period 2010-2014. This programme includes among other priorities, the ones of “Europe that protects”, “Access to Europe” and “Europe of solidarity”.

On the one hand, in the priority “Europe that protects”, besides enhancing internal security, it remarks the responsibility of Europe on fighting against the cross-border crimes in subjects such as human trafficking. On the other hand, in the priority “Access to Europe”, it recommends the development of efficient policies for border management and visa concessions to make legal entering to Europe safer and more efficient. In addition, in the priority “Europe of solidarity”, it mentions the accountability of the European Union for having a responsible migration policy based on flexibility and solidarity and taking into account both the needs of migrants and the EU citizens.

¹¹ European Commission (15th December 2015). Press release: A European Border and Coast Guard to protect Europe's External Borders. Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6327_en.htm

¹² Council of the European Union (2009). Stockholm Programme. Available at: <https://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2017024%202009%20INIT>

However, despite of having this type of official legal tools available, the European Union is having problems putting theory into practice because the flows of migrants seem to be uncontrollable and the official institutions are feeling overwhelmed.

Finally, with reference to the last area of action, reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility, we could say that it is this point the one that is bringing more problems among the Member States and is showing the deficiencies of the European Union. Inside this point is included the equitable distribution of refugees among countries. For this aspect the European Union also has official tools, such as the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. However, as with the previous areas, although there exist official tools regulating this topic, there are problems to apply them, as it is the first time we are living such a grave humanitarian crisis.

In the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum of 2008, the European Council “reminds that every chased foreigner has the right to receive help and protection in the European Union territory”. Moreover, the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum also established “that asylum seekers are treated equally in an open and fair system throughout the European Union” and the “strengthening of the governance of the Schengen system”.¹³

However, this theory is not being applied. The refugee crisis is leading to conflicts among the Member States, due to the inequitable distribution of refugees and to the lack of solidarity that many countries are showing making excuses to not accept more people in their territories.

As a consequence, the European institutions have continued working in this area these last months in order to establish more specific rules for this concrete crisis, rather than using the general theory of its official policies and programs. So in line with this scenario, one of the latest communications of the European Commission was done the 29th of September 2015.¹⁴ In this communication it puts as a priority for the next six months the provision of financial and technical support to the States having the highest pressures, as well as the equitable relocation of 120,000 refugees that have arrived to Greece and Italy. Moreover, in

¹³ EUR-Lex (24th September 2008). European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Ajl0038>

¹⁴ European Commission. (29th September 2015). Managing the refugee crisis: immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/communication_on_managing_the_refugee_crisis_en.pdf

this communication they remind the Member States that each of them has to take this as a priority.

To sum up, we could say that the European Union has some official rules, programs and policies that regulate the aspects related with migration, asylum and protection of people. However, as it has never faced before such a serious situation in this topic, it is being forced to modify its rules and take decisions along the way. These decisions include imposing the Member States some responsibilities that have not been assumed before, fact that is leading to conflicts.

In the following point will be analysed what the Member States have really done.

4.2. What the Member States have really done

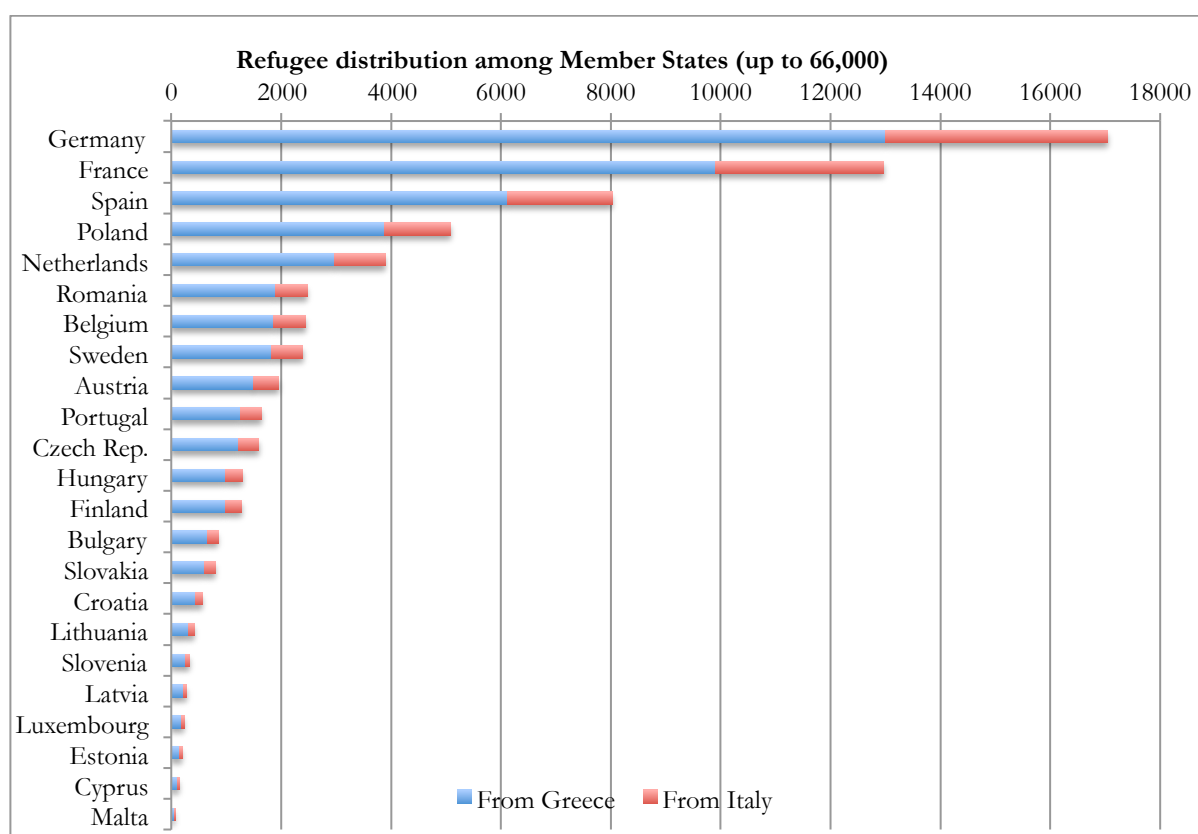
It is one thing what Brussels proposes and another thing is what the Member States really do. And what has become evident is that the opinion of Brussels and the individual opinion of each country about how to face this crisis, are completely different. On the one hand, there are some countries that defend the idea of establishing compulsory quotas to each country and an equitable distribution of the asylum applicants. On the other hand, there are other countries asking for closing the frontiers and not allowing more people to enter in their countries because otherwise, there will be a “call effect”, which will lead to an unstoppable flow of migrants.

Related to the area of “Reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility”, Brussels saw the necessity of helping Italy and Greece, which were the countries receiving most of the refugees. Consequently, in May 2015, the European Commission created a system of quotas based on four variables: population, GDP, unemployment rate and past number of asylum seekers and of resettled refugees by each country. This system of quotas had the objective of doing an equitable distribution of refugees among countries in order to reduce the pressures that Italy and Greece were suffering. As it was expected, at the beginning Member States were reluctant to accept this mandatory quota system, as it meant giving up their autonomy in the decision-making about this topic. Instead, they accepted in July 2015 a system of voluntary quotas that obviously was translated into the acceptance of a much lower number of refugees than what Brussels was asking them.¹⁵

¹⁵ Suances P. (7th September 2015). La crisis de las cuotas de refugiados, en 13 preguntas. El Mundo. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2015/09/07/55edc9a322601d4a6b8b4599.html>

As the arrivals during the summer continued increasing, at date September 2015, Brussels published a Council Decision of relocating 120,000 people from Greece and Italy to other countries.¹⁶ This time, the legal text tried to emphasise that it was a voluntary decision for each country and thus, favouring the signing of the agreement by as many countries as possible. It was established that 15,600 applicants would be relocated from Italy and 50,400 from Greece (total of 66,000 applicants), leaving 54,000 (up to 120,000 people), still to be resolved where to allocate.

Graph 11: Refugee distribution among European countries (Sept. 2015 proposal)



Own elaboration. Data source: Council of the European Union (22nd September 2015). Council decision. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32015D1601>

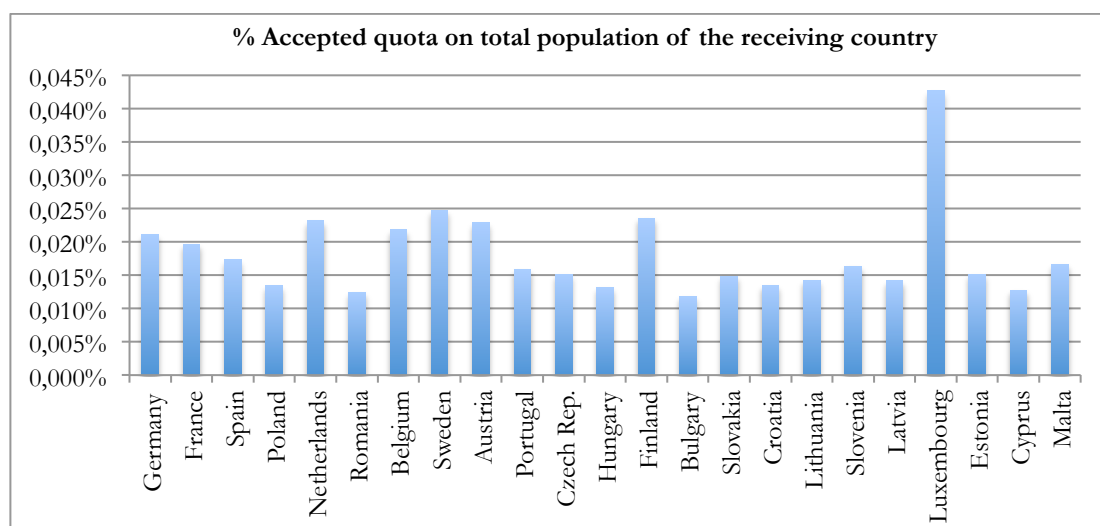
As it can be seen in Graph 11, the three countries assuming the highest number of refugees are Germany, France and Spain. The rest, according to the variables used for the elaboration of the distribution mechanism, have to accept a much lower number of people. This chart provides a very unequal picture, however, we have to take into account that

¹⁶ Council of the European Union (22nd September 2015). Council decision: establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32015D1601>

Germany, France and Spain are also the largest by population. So I have decided to construct a graph showing the percentage of accepted quota on total population of the receiving country and the result shows that the effort made by each country in terms of their total population is quite similar and quite small. Graph 12 shows clearly that the distribution in terms of population is quite equitable -with some exceptions such as Luxembourg that accepts a high number of refugees relative to its population.

From this information we can conclude that in terms of equitable distribution of refugees, the system of quotas works well. Nevertheless, the results also show that European countries could do a higher effort since the percentage of refugees on total population is very small. Despite of all of this, as we will see now, many countries have shown their reluctance to accept what Brussels imposes them.

Graph 12: Percentage of accepted quota on total population of the receiving country (September 2015 proposal)



Own elaboration. Data Source: Data source: Council of the European Union (22nd September 2015) Council decision. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32015D1601> and World Bank (2014 population data).

Which was the response of each country to this proposal? We can divide countries into three different groups:

1. The ones accepting the agreement, where we can find among others, countries such as Germany, France and Sweden and Greece and Italy, being these last two countries the ones benefited from this pact (not included in the distribution).

2. United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark, which are exempt from accepting this agreement due to the exemption clause that they have in their Treaties with the European Union, but they are willing to accept some refugees.
3. The ones denying the agreement, which are the so-called “Visegrád Group”: Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia. Latvia also showed its disagreement to this pact. This group of countries defended a long-term solution but without the necessity of accepting a compulsory relocation of refugees. But despite of the complaints, in theory, they have to obey the decision.

Although all the Member States should have agreed this proposal in order to enter into force, in this case, they decided to start advancing in the relocation of refugees despite of the rejection of some of them, as it is an issue of extreme gravity.

Here we have in more detail the position of some of the main countries representing the three different positions regarding the distribution:

Table 3: Position of some EU countries regarding the redistribution of refugees

Agree with the distribution mechanism	Disagree with the distribution mechanism	Exempt from the distribution mechanism
<p><u>Germany</u></p> <p>As shown in point 2.2, it is the country receiving the highest number of asylum applications. It is showing much solidarity and is the one doing the biggest efforts. Angela Merkel considers that the Dublin Regulation-which obliges refugees to ask for asylum in the first EU country in which they arrive- is obsolete and she defends a system of a more equitable distribution among countries.</p>	<p><u>Hungary</u></p> <p>Hungary has taken the role of leader of the Eastern countries against the decisions “imposed” by Western countries. It is against the system of quotas because it thinks it acts as a “call effect”. In August 2015, it built a fence of 175 km along its border with Serbia to avoid the entrance of refugees. However, despite of these efforts for avoiding the entrance of more people, Hungary has become one of the most important ways of entry to Europe.</p>	<p><u>United Kingdom</u></p> <p>It has an exemption clause that allows it to not participate in the system of quotas established by Brussels. They criticized this system because they also think it acts as a “call effect”. Their position is more focused on solving the root of the problem in the origin countries to stop the flow of people. However, they have accepted thousands of refugees till this moment.</p>
<p><u>France</u></p> <p>At the beginning was reluctant to accept a system of quotas but afterwards it has accepted its relocation responsibility. It supports Germany in the idea of an equitable distribution of refugees and it defends the idea of doing a common migratory and asylum policy all around the European Union.</p>	<p><u>Poland</u></p> <p>It is one of the countries with the toughest stand against refugees. It supports the position of Hungary together with the other Visegrád Group countries (Slovakia and Czech Republic). It accepted some refugees at the beginning but it is not willing to accept more and it is against the compulsory system of quotas.</p>	<p><u>Ireland</u></p> <p>As United Kingdom it has an exemption clause thanks to which it is not participating in the distribution mechanism. However, it has also shown its solidarity and is accepting thousands of refugees.</p>

Own elaboration. Data source: Eurostat. / Martínez S. (7th September 2015). El drama que desune Europa. Diario de Noticias de Navarra.

Regarding Spain, in my opinion it is a little bit difficult to choose in which position it is. At the beginning, Spain was against the distribution quotas, however, concerning the distribution proposal of September 2015, they softened their position and they were among the countries accepting it. However, if we look at real data, the reality seems quite different: at January 2016, only 18 refugees were taken in Spain (out of the 16,231 refugees that Spain had accepted to take in total). This means a 0.1% of the total forecasted.¹⁷

5. CRITIC / PROBLEMS IN MANAGING THE CRISIS

It is the first time that the European Union as a politico-economic union is facing such a serious situation of coordination of policies, agreement and solidarity among Member States. As a consequence, many problems are arising in the crisis management. These problems will be analysed in this section from a critical perspective.

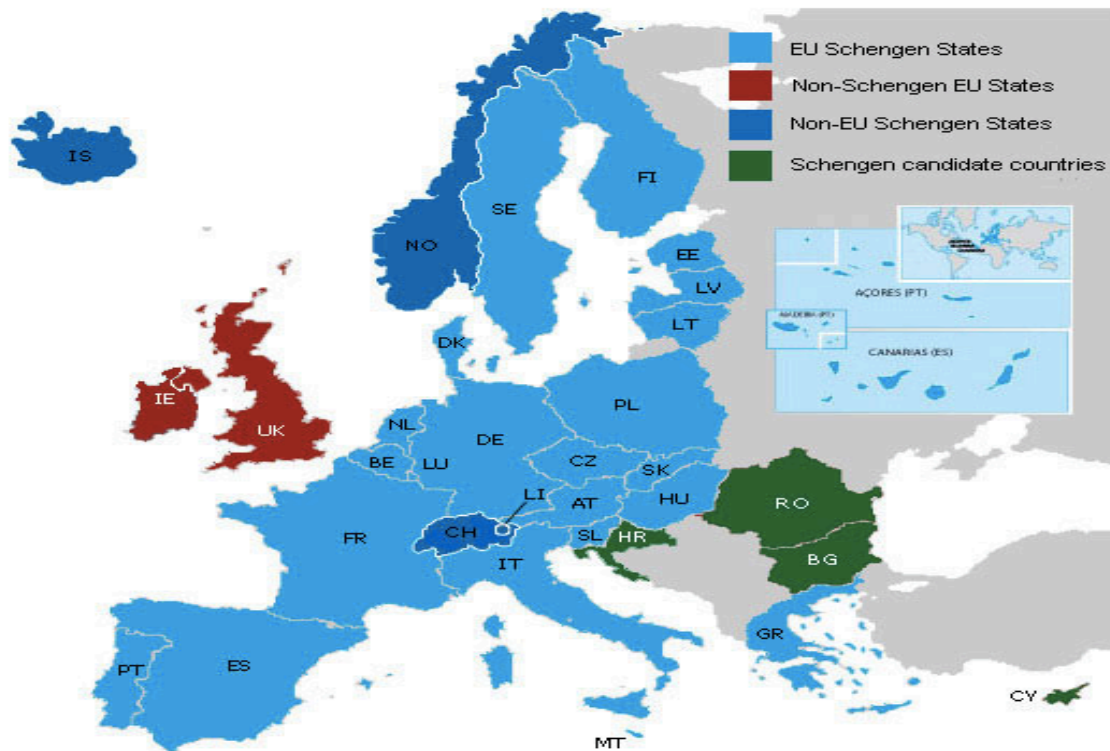
5.1. Schengen is threatened

The Schengen Area, one of the greatest accomplishments of the European Union is threatened. Just as a reminder, the Schengen Area is the territory comprising 26 countries from which 22 are Member States, in which there are not internal borders (Figure 4). Thus, people can freely move among these countries. This is, it acts as if it was a unique country. As a consequence, once someone has entered in a Schengen country, he can move to other Schengen countries without facing any control.

The implementation of the Schengen Area was done in 1995 and it is considered one of the principal factors that represent the unity of the European Union. It eliminated any border check among the signatory countries and it also represents a sign of trust among them, because it was left to the accountability of each country the protection of their external borders and the checking of foreigner identities. Thus, according to Schengen, each country has the responsibility of controlling its external borders and not doing any control in its internal borders with other members of the Schengen Area.

¹⁷ De la Cal J.C and De la Cal L. (13th January 2016). 18 de 16.000: Así viven los únicos refugiados acogidos por España. El Mundo. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/sociedad/2016/01/13/569536ecca4741600c8b4634.html>

Figure 4: Schengen Area



Data source: European Commission. Migration and home affairs: Schengen Area. Available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/index_en.htm

However, nowadays it is much said that the Schengen agreement is threatened. Why? Because the incapacity of the European and national authorities to manage the flow of refugees who enter in the Schengen Area and move freely all around the countries, is leading to a high entrance of people in some countries, that is making the situation for them unsustainable. And at this point we are not talking about Greece and Italy, the first receptors of refugees but to countries such as Germany and Sweden, which are the countries where most of the refugees want to live. Not only for the obvious reason of the economic situation in these countries but also because they offer better conditions for the refugees that arrive to their territory.

Germany's asylum policy offers refugees 143€/month during three months and afterwards, they receive German classes and professional training to be able to integrate in the labour market more easily. In Sweden, during the processing of the asylum application, the Migration Agency provides them accommodation and the Public Labour Service helps them in their search for employment. Moreover, they have access to public health. Once the refugee has received the permission to stay in Sweden, they can live on their own or accept the place where the government allocates them, which includes housing and

economic aid.¹⁸ Besides, in Germany there exists a “National Integration Plan” since 2007 that favours the integration of immigrants into the German society and tries to improve their living conditions.¹⁹

So as Schengen allows the free movement of people inside its area, once the refugees have entered it, they can cross the countries freely till they arrive to the ones with the best economic and labour opportunities, this is, Germany and Sweden mainly.

As shown in Graph 5, both Germany and Sweden are the ones receiving the highest number of asylum applications and their authorities have already shown their necessity for solidarity from other countries in the task of accepting asylum seekers. Angela Merkel said in August 2015 that “all the Member States should obey the refugee quotas. If there is not an equitable distribution of refugees, Schengen should be revised”²⁰. Moreover, Belgium’s Prime Minister, Charles Michel, in relation with the terrorism threat Europe is living, also pointed out the necessity of revising the Schengen agreement in order to impose more controls to check people identity.²¹

It is important to know that the Schengen legislation allows border checks in some extraordinary situations. The explanation of the Schengen Area by the European Commission leaves it clear: “If there is a serious threat to public policy or internal security, a Schengen country may exceptionally temporarily reintroduce border controls at its internal borders for, in principle, a limited period of no more than thirty days.”²² However, as the flow of refugees seems to continue for months or years, thirty days is not enough for these countries, which will be tempted to break the Schengen agreement. In fact, they are

¹⁸ Del Barrio A. (8th September 2015). No es lo mismo ser refugiado en Alemania que en España. El Mundo. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2015/09/08/55ed57a522601ddb6a8b4575.html>

¹⁹ Böhmer M. (2007). The National Integration Plan- A Contribution of Germany Towards Shaping a European Integration Policy. Available at: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Forum21/Issue_No10/N10_National_integration_plan_en.pdf

²⁰ Sanchez R. (August 31st 2015). El Mundo. Available at: <http://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2015/08/31/55e44e5f22601d3d488b457f.html>

²¹ Why the Schengen Agreement may be under threat (August 24th 2015). The Economist. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/08/economist-explains-18>

²² European Commission. Migration and home affairs: Schengen Area. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/index_en.htm

already imposing controls in their borders: Germany, Austria and Hungary have already restricted the movement of illegal migrants across them.²³

Together with these controls, fences are starting to be built, something that reminds Europeans past times of war and conflicts among the different countries. Not only has Hungary built a fence in its border with Serbia, but also Sweden built this past December a fence to protect itself from the entrance of migrants coming from Denmark. All this without forgetting the fences that already exist in the Bulgarian and Greek borders with Turkey and of course the so-called Melilla's fence.²⁴

The problems for applying Schengen seem to have two causes: First of all, the lack of resources and capabilities of the national authorities of the Mediterranean countries (Greece and Italy mainly) to control all the migrants who enter everyday and to obtain the fingerprint of each of them. And secondly, what has already been mentioned in previous paragraphs, the lack of solidarity of the Member States in accepting an equitable distribution of the asylum applicants in order to help those having higher pressures.

What will end up happening with the Schengen Agreement? In my opinion, it is quite difficult that the European Union will eliminate it, since it symbolizes one of the biggest advances in our history and despite its drawbacks, it represents great benefits for the European Union in many aspects: it reduces commercial costs of moving goods across countries as trucks do not have to pass control checks, it allows tourists to move easily among countries, it allows the free movement of workers from countries with high unemployment to others with more opportunities, improving European labour markets and finally, it allows people to study and live in other countries. So these are really important motives to not eliminate Schengen, but it is clear that a reform is needed in order to better manage the migratory flows and European authorities are already starting to think on those reforms.

5.2. Violation of human rights

There exist several legislations that regulate human rights for everybody such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. Others that regulate human

²³ Shooting Schengen (September 19th 2015). The Economist. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21665021-only-eu-wide-agreement-asylum-can-save-passport-free-travel-europe-shooting-schengen>

²⁴ More neighbours make more fences (January 7th 2016). The Economist. Available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2016/01/daily-chart-5>

rights inside the European Union, such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights. In Addition, there exists a specific legislation that regulates the rights of refugees: The Refugee Convention signed in 1951. Thus, in theory, the refugees arriving to Europe are protected by these legal texts. However, Amnesty International, in its report “The global refugee crisis: A conspiracy of neglect”, denounces basic human rights violations and the ignorance of the Refugee Convention “with devastating consequences: the international refugee protection system is broken”.²⁵

Analysing those legal texts in more detail, we can see which main human rights is violating Europe in its management of the crisis.

Regarding The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, its article number 14 refers to the asylum seekers: “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”.²⁶ The European Union is violating this right since it is establishing asylum quotas instead of giving the right to every person in need for asylum. Moreover, some specific countries, as explained some paragraphs above, are closing their borders denying the asylum to thousands of people. It is true that admitting everyone would be unsustainable for the European resources, but denying the universal right for asylum implies a grave violation of a basic human right.

With respect to the European Convention on Human Rights, mainly the article 14 and the Protocol number 4 are being violated. First of all, the article 14 refers to “Prohibition of discrimination”, specifying that “the rights and freedoms in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, religion [...] national or social origin [...]”.²⁷ And this is obviously being violated because refugees are not enjoying the same rights and freedoms as others inside the European Union.

Secondly, inside the Protocol number 4, article number 4 claims: “Prohibition of collective expulsion of aliens”, this is, a group of foreigners cannot be expelled all together, and this is being done by the Member States, which are doing several deportations. The rate of deportations has increased in the past months, limiting the acceptance to those people

²⁵ Amnesty International (2015). The global refugee crisis: A conspiracy of neglect. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/es/documents/pol40/1796/2015/en/>

²⁶ United Nations (1948). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available at: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf

²⁷ European Court of Human Rights (1950). European Convention on Human Rights. Available at: http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf

coming from dangerous territories. The Luxembourg minister Jean Asselborn, said it clear: “protect to those who need this protection and deport to their countries to those not having the right to stay”.²⁸ But, how can we measure who really needs the protection and who does not? Where is the limit?

Concerning the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, articles 18 “Right to asylum” and 19 “Protection in the event of removal, expulsion or extradition” are being violated. The article 19 remembers again what Protocol number 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights says: “Collective expulsions are prohibited” and it adds that “No one may be removed, expelled or extradited to a State where there is a serious risk that he or she would be subjected to the death penalty, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”²⁹ So this begs the question, again, who decides the limit between considering that someone will be in risk when going back to his country or will not be in risk?

Finally, The Refugee Convention is an instrument extremely important because it is the international text that really regulates the situation of refugees. This Convention ensures international shelter and protection of the human rights of those people having the status of refugees. Besides, this Convention talks about the necessity of responsibility-sharing among countries, in order to solve refugee problems together and not leaving countries alone coping with the problems that arise when handling refugees’ rights. So first of all, this principle of responsibility sharing is not being accomplished.

Moreover, there are some specific articles inside the Refugee Convention in which countries are failing: the Convention includes basic rights such as right to public education (article 22), right to have identity papers (article 27) and right to have travel documents (article 28).³⁰

One article that I think should be analysed in more detail is Article 17: Wage-earning employment, which says that “The Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the most favourable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign

²⁸ Pérez C. (9th October 2015). La UE intensifica la deportación de los sin papeles y blinda sus fronteras. El País. Available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/10/08/actualidad/1444330061_431446.html

²⁹ European Commission (2000). EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

³⁰ UNHCR (1951). The Refugee Convention. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/4ca34be29.pdf>

country in the same circumstances, as regards the right to engage in wage-earning employment.”

Something that happens in a regular basis is that many host countries put difficulties in the recognition of migrants qualifications obtained in their origin country. And consequently, migrants are considered less qualified than nationals and have to accept worse labour conditions. According to the report “Labour market inclusion of the less skilled migrants in the European Union” from the International Organization for Migration, in countries such as Germany, Finland, Czech Republic and Slovenia, migrant workers are considered less well-educated than the native workers. Furthermore, migrants’ origin also affects in the recognition of their qualifications. As an example, this report states that in Finland 21% of Russians are recognized having tertiary education while only 10% of the migrants from Somalia obtain this recognition.³¹ Thus, this data corroborates that the right of engaging in wage-earning employment is not being accomplished in the extent in which those migrants are not given the same opportunities as others.

It has to be mentioned that this Convention also determines that refugees have some obligations in the countries in which they are taken in. Article 2: General Obligations, says that “Every refugee has duties to the country in which he finds himself, which require in particular that he conform to its laws and regulations as well as to measures taken for the maintenance of public order.” This means that refugees must adapt to the laws established in the country that is giving him asylum. And of course any illegal activity will be penalized, as it would be done to a national.

6. DISMANTLING ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REFUGEE ACCEPTANCE

European society is more focused on what refugees receive from us than thinking on the positive effects that can generate to our economy and society. In this section, I will try to show the positive contribution of refugees to the European Union by dismantling with data some of the most repeated arguments against the acceptance of refugees I have heard.

-“Accepting so many refugees will destroy our native culture”³²

Some arguments I have heard on the news against the entrance of migrants in the European countries are related to the fear of losing our religion, culture or traditions

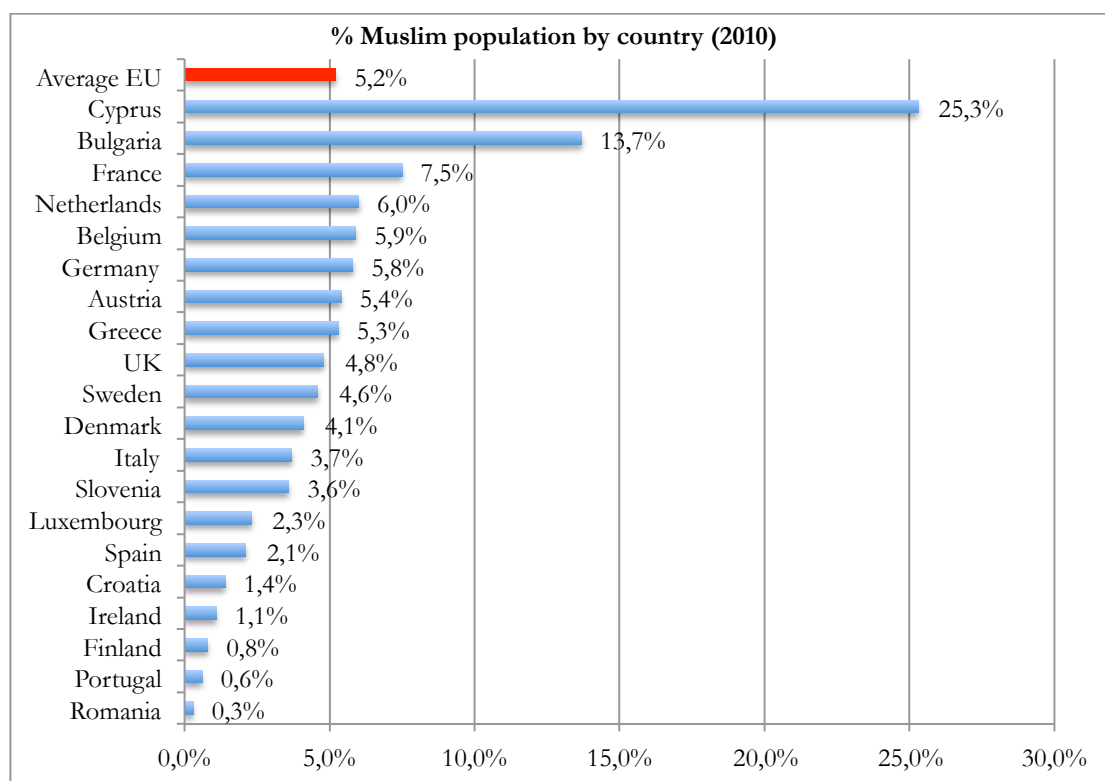
³¹ International Organization for Migration (2012). Labor market inclusion of the less skilled migrants in the European Union.

³² El rechazo a los refugiados se une en Europa al miedo al Islam. (28th September 2015). ABC. Available at: <http://www.abc.es/internacional/20150928/abci-rechazo-refugiados-miedo-islam-201509261756.html>

because all those people coming have different cultures.

Firstly, there is an extended thought about the fact that Muslim religion will be established in the European Union, since it is the most common religion of the immigrants who are arriving to the European Union. However, if we look at the data, the reality shows that we are very far from having Muslim religion as the principal religion in Europe. In Graph 13 we can see that the percentage of Muslim population in the European Union is quite low.

Graph 13: Percentage of Muslim population by country³³



Own elaboration. Source: Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project (2010). Available at:

<http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/csv/9368/preview>

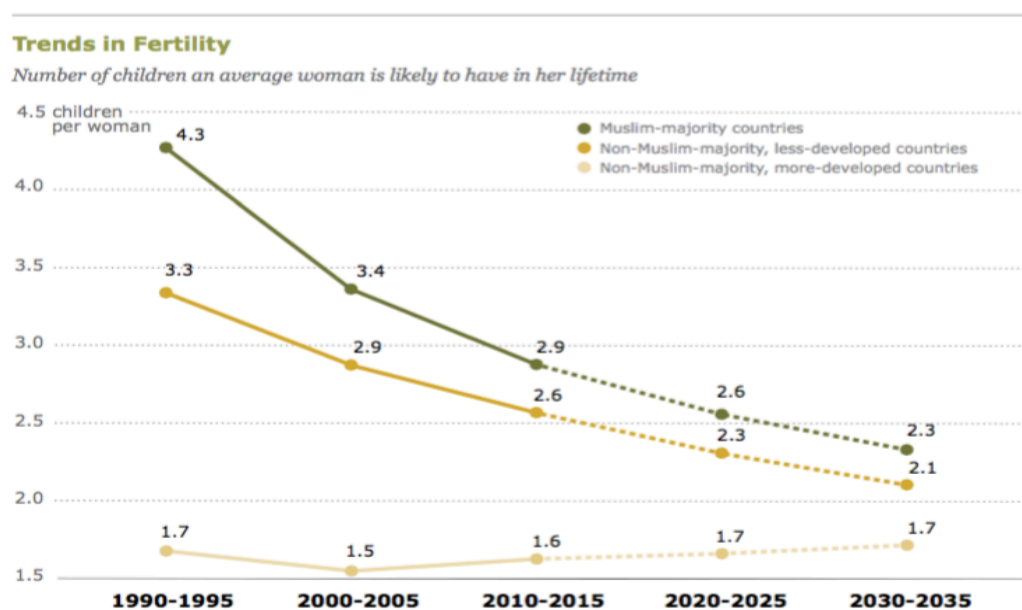
As it can be seen in the graph, the average Muslim population percentage in the European Union in 2010 accounted for around a 5% of total population. Moreover, it has to be taken into account that there are two countries that increase this average, which are Cyprus, with a 25.3% of Muslim population and Bulgaria with a 13.7%. So if we eliminated these two countries, the average would account just for the 3.6% of total population. This percentage is quite low, and although it seems clear that this percentage will increase, as most of the refugees are Muslims, the total effect will not be so dramatic, as the number of refugees on total population is very low, as shown before in Graph 12. An increasing pattern is expected, as data predicts that in 2030, Muslim population will be an 8% of Europe's

³³ Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, The Czech Republic and Malta are not included because there were less than 10,000 Muslims.

population.³⁴ However, in my opinion, it is still a low percentage, so Europe will not become a Muslim continent at least in the near future. As a consequence, it has no sense to use this argument against the acceptance of these people in our countries.

Moreover, inside this fear of losing native culture, we could include the aspect of birth rates. As in Europe the birth rates are quite low (1.55 children per women in 2013)³⁵, and of course lower than the birth rates of the main origin countries of the refugees entering Europe, some people fear that asylum applicants might overtake native population in some decades. Inside this point I would like to point out two facts: firstly that fertility rates in most Muslim-majority countries have fallen in last decades.³⁶ Graph 14, helps us to see this downward trend. It is seen that its fertility rate remains higher than the fertility rate of other cultures, but the pattern is clear, a decrease that will continue in time. So with this data we could say that this higher fertility rates will be able to increase the fertility rate of Europe, something that is quite positive and necessary, but at the same time without the possibility of overtaking native population since their fertility rate is decreasing.

Graph 14: Trends in fertility



Source: Pew Research Center (January 2011). The Future of the Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030. Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/01/FutureGlobalMuslimPopulation-WebPDF-Feb10.pdf>

³⁴ Hackett C. (17th November 2015). 5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe. Pew Research Center. Available at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/>

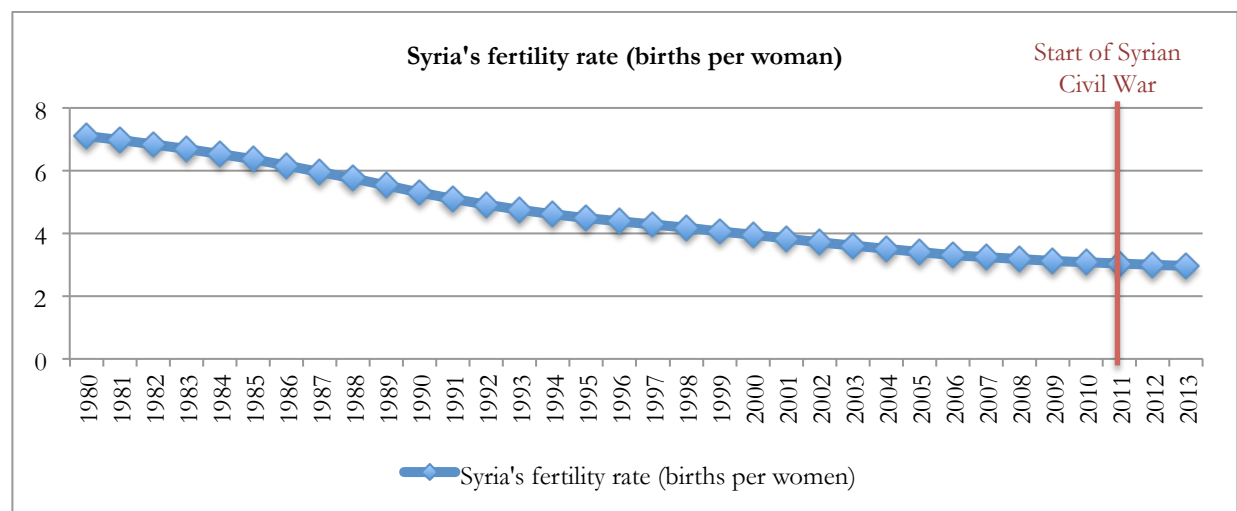
³⁵ Eurostat. Total fertility rate (number of children per woman): EU 28 Countries.

³⁶ Pew Research Center. The Future of the Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030. Available at: <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/01/FutureGlobalMuslimPopulation-WebPDF-Feb10.pdf>

More specifically, I have decided to look at the fertility rate of Syria, the main origin country of the refugees coming in this crisis, and the data shows that fertility rate in this country is decreasing. In Graph 15, we can see this downward trend that seems to continue in the future. Some people may say that this contraction in birth rates may be due to the Civil War that Syria is living since 2011 and that once they come to Europe the fertility rate of Syrians living here will increase. However, if we look at Graph 15 we can see that the fertility rate in Syria was already decreasing before the start of the Civil War, in fact, this trend comes since the 80s, so it is clear that the pattern of Syrian's population tends to a contraction. However, as it can be seen in the graph, it is higher than the fertility rate of the EU (1.5 children per woman in EU vs. 3 in Syria). So again, with the specific case of Syria we can conclude that the higher fertility rate of refugees will have a positive effect in the aged European population but without the possibility of exceeding native population.

As a conclusion, we could say that this argument cannot be used as an excuse for not accepting refugees in European countries, since the positive effects for Europe are evident.

Graph 15: Syria's fertility rate (births per woman)

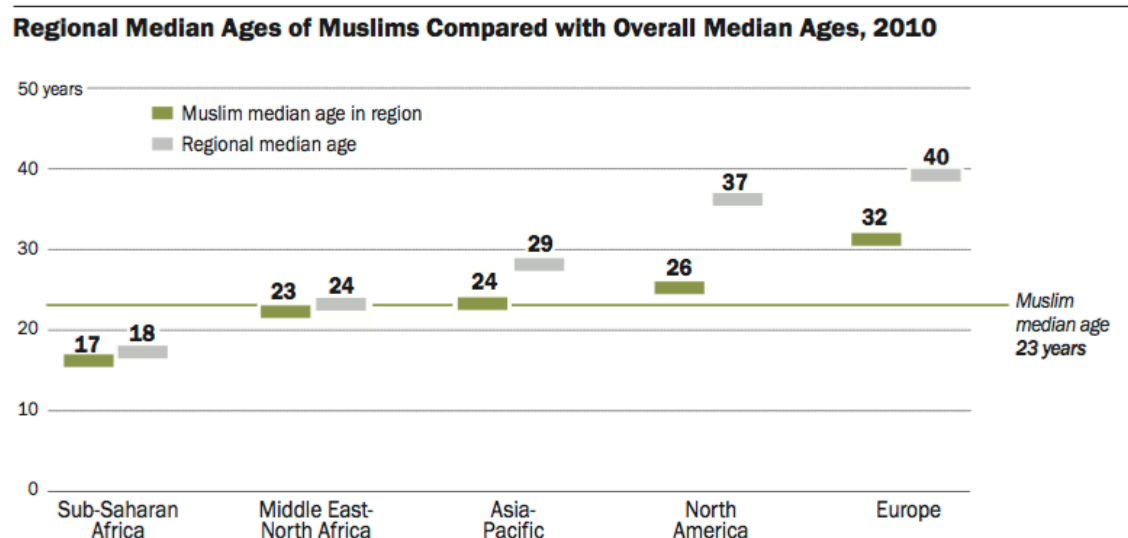


Own elaboration. Data source: The World Bank

The second fact I wanted to point out related to this point is that the average age of the people coming is much lower than the average age in Europe, so this have to be seen as a positive effect for Europe, which has a very aged population. Data shows that Muslims are younger (23 years on average) than overall global population (28 years on average).³⁷ More specifically, in 2010, Muslims living in Europe were 32 years on average, while the average age for all Europeans was 40 years old, as it can be seen in Graph 16.

³⁷ Pew Research Center (December 2012). The Global Religious Landscape: A report on the size and distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010. Available at: <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/jesinst/pdf/Grim-globalReligion-full.pdf>

Graph 16: Regional Median Ages of Muslims Compared with Overall Median Ages, 2010



Source: Pew Research Center. (December 2012). The Global Religious Landscape: A report on the size and distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010. Available at: <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/jesinst/pdf/Grim-globalReligion-full.pdf>

Taking Syria (the main sender of refugees) and Germany (the one receiving the highest asylum applications) as an example, we can realize how positive can be for the rejuvenation of Europe the acceptance of as many refugees as possible: data shows that while the average age in Syria in 2015 was of 23.8 years, in Germany it was of 46.5 years.³⁸ Moreover, Germany generates more jobs than number of working people available to cover them. So for Germany the acceptance of refugees means a necessary increase in the labour force. Thus, we can conclude that it will be very positive for Europe's population the integration of a much younger population because without them, in some years EU's working population will be scarce.³⁹

-“Immigrants consume too many public services”⁴⁰

This is also a much-heard argument. The OECD report “Migration Policy Debates: How will the refugee surge affect the European Economy?” from November 2015, shows that it is true that in the short-run, public expenditure increases to offer refugees the initial

³⁸ The World Factbook (CIA) (2015) Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2177.html#sy>

³⁹ Immigration is good for economic growth. If Europe gets it right, refugees can be too. (15th September 2015). The Huffington Post. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-portes/economic-europe-refugees_b_8128288.html

⁴⁰ Ikuspegi (Observatorio Vasco de Inmigración): El impacto económico y demográfico de la inmigración extranjera en el País Vasco. Available at: http://www.ikuspegi.eus/documentos/informes/impacto_economico/resumen_impacto_economico_ok.pdf

support they need but that it also decreases rapidly as they integrate in the labour market. As an example, it shows that Germany expects an extra expenditure of the 0.5% of GDP to support the refugees in years 2016 and 2017 and the European Commission, as a representative of the European Union as a whole, expects an additional 0.1% of EU GDP. So it is true that in the short-run countries are increasing public spending, but, according to the OECD, this fiscal expansion will lead to an increase of aggregate demand in the European Union of around 0.1-0.2% of EU GDP.⁴¹

So as a conclusion of this report from the OECD we could say that Europe needs to take a long-term perspective of this problem as “there will be short-term costs but there will also be sizeable economic and public-finance benefits in the medium-long term.”

In addition to this data, some researches about the use of the welfare system by foreign people against their contribution to it, helps us to dismantle this argument. More concretely, I have found an interesting report from Ikuspegi, The Basque Immigration Observatory, which shows that the economic resources that immigrants generated between 2008 and 2012 to the public administration were higher than the expenses of their use of the welfare system. Table 4, shows the data that demonstrates this fact.

Table 4: Social expenses and public income of total and foreign population in the Basque country (2008-2012)

		2008			2012		
		Foreigners	Total	%	Foreigners	Total	%
Expenses	Social Services	118.328.670	1.681.034.107	7,0	236.840.810	2.124.040	11,2
	Education	130.895.531	2.074.735.454	6,3	172.649.668	2.244.520.484	7,7
	Health	100.416.729	3.176.160.426	3,2	144.711.859	3.399.651.186	4,3
	Housing	22.353.538	520.414.521	4,3	39.186.586	290.313.485	13,5
	TOTAL	371.994.468	7.452.344.508	5,0	593.388.923	8.058.525.184	7,4
Income	PIT	112.830.198	4.199.653.000	2,7	201.517.141	4.453.753.000	4,5
	VAT	54.249.323	1.238.550.233	4,4	84.026.516	1.707.561.636	4,9
	Special Taxes	55.982.854	1.393.919.000	4,0	59.742.832	1.497.171.000	4,0
	Housing	11.085.719	349.200.565	3,2	9.054.908	113.077.782	8,0
	Contributions	208.949.037	6.331.789.000	3,3	277.245.295	6.447.565.000	4,3
	TOTAL	443.097.131	13.513.111.798	3,3	631.586.692	14.219.128.418	4,4
Difference		71.102.663			38.197.770		

Source: Ikuspegi (Observatorio Vasco de Inmigración): El impacto económico y demográfico de la inmigración extranjera en el país vasco. Available at:

http://www.ikuspegi.eus/documentos/informes/impacto_economico/resumen_impacto_economico_ok.pdf

⁴¹ OECD (November 2015). Migration Policy Debates n° 8: How will the refugee surge affect the European Economy? Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/migration/How-will-the-refugee-surge-affect-the-European-economy.pdf>

As it can be seen in Table 4, both in 2008 and 2012, the income generated by foreign population to the public finances was higher than the public expenses used to offer public services to this group of people. It is true that due to the economic crisis, the differential has diminished from €71 million to €38 million, but the positive effect is still quite important.

So as a conclusion to this point we could say that in the short-run the expenditure will increase but this will have the positive effect of increasing aggregate demand. And afterwards, as refugees are integrated in the labour market, this expenditure will decrease.

At this point, someone may say that refugees are not enough prepared in order to integrate in our labour markets, however, once again, I have data that dismantles this argument: according to ACNUR, the 80% of the Syrian refugees arriving to Europe (main nationality of those coming in this particular crisis) have secondary or university studies, so their integration in our labour market should not be so difficult.⁴²

Besides, as those people coming are well-prepared and have different abilities obtained in their origin countries, they can improve European labour markets performance, putting pressure on Europeans to improve their competencies, leading to better prepared workers in general and increasing competitiveness.

As a conclusion, we can say that this argument against the acceptance of refugees is invalid.

-“Accepting refugees will bring terrorism to Europe”⁴³

Another argument that I have heard against refugees is that they are bringing terrorism to Europe. From my point of view, it is true that there exist the threat of having some terrorist entering among all the people who enter through Greece and Italy since these countries are overwhelmed with the massive arrivals of people and it is difficult for them to control the identities of all of them. However, I think that if a terrorist wants to act in Europe he will find the way to enter. Moreover, people should not forget that the nationalities of those terrorists are very wide and there are many of them who are Europeans.

⁴² UNHCR (2016). Profiling of Syrian arrivals on Greek islands in January 2016 (A result of interviews with Syrians during January 2016).

⁴³ Figueredo E. (12th January 2016). Francia alerta a España de la posible llegada de yihadistas entre el “flujo migratorio”. La Vanguardia. Available at: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20160112/301361434728/yihadistas-francia-espana-refugiados-terrorismo.html>

So in my opinion Europeans are being selfish in this aspect. We cannot deny the entrance of innocent people who need our help just because we want to protect ourselves from the terror they are living in their countries. In fact, in a survey done by ACNUR in January 2016 to Syrian refugees, the 94% answered that they were leaving Syria escaping from violence and conflict.⁴⁴ So this is a good moment for putting in practice all those statements of solidarity that appear in the official Treaties of the European Union and start spending money in helping rather than spending it in imposing border controls.

7. POSSIBLE DURABLE SOLUTIONS PROPOSED

In this last part of my research I will try to explain some of the possible solutions to this crisis. Obviously, if the solutions were easy to apply, this crisis would have already been solved. However, we have to be aware of the dimension of the situation and understand that it is not going to be solved in the short-run. Indeed, the European Union should take a long-term view and in my opinion, it should take the role of a global leader in order to be able to solve this crisis that is not only affecting Europe, but the whole world. Moreover, I consider important to finish my research reminding that more actions than the ones that the EU has already taken are possible and necessary.

-Solving the Syrian conflict

It is clear that the principle cause of the massive wave of people through the Mediterranean Sea is the Syrian Civil War. As a consequence, one of the solutions would be to eliminate the cause. Nonetheless, it is also one of the most complicated solutions to achieve.

The scenario is quite complex because it involves many parts: Asad's government, rebel groups, ISIS and Al Qaeda mainly. Moreover, the geographical situation of Syria is strategic because of the oil reserves that exist in that zone. As a consequence, I consider this conflict is still far from being solved because of the interest of many countries of controlling the zone.

It is quite difficult to find the solution, but something that is clear for me is that the military intervention is just generating more deaths. In this same line goes the opinion of the United Nations, as Staffan de Mistura, the UN special envoy to Syria stated in September 2015: "Only a politic solution can solve the conflict, because the military one is unacceptable due to the huge amount of dead, injured and displaced people".

⁴⁴ UNHCR (2016). Profiling of Syrian arrivals on Greek islands in January 2016 (A result of interviews with Syrians during January 2016).

However, although the European Union should take an important role in this conflict, I consider this solution is a matter that involves governments of many countries in the world and as I have said before, it will take years to be solved. Thus, from this point on, I will explain some solutions that affect only to the European Union and its management of the refugee crisis inside of its territory.

-Invest in the development of common asylum and immigration policies

In my opinion, one of the main problems of the management of this crisis is that it does not exist a common migration and asylum policy for all the Member States.

In the European Union the competences are divided into three different groups: exclusive competences, shared competences and supporting competences. According to this division, only in the exclusive competences of the EU, the EU can legislate alone and adopt binding acts. However, in the case of shared competences, both the EU and Member States can adopt legally binding acts.⁴⁵

This last is the case of asylum and immigration issues, which enter inside the competence of “area of freedom, security and justice”. According to its nature of shared competence, there exist some common standards, but each country takes its decisions. More specifically, in terms of asylum, “Common minimum standards and procedures for asylum seekers are intended to guarantee a high level of protection for those who need it, while ensuring that national asylum systems are not abused” and in terms of immigration, “countries are working to develop a coherent EU immigration policy [...]. The aim is to take account of the priorities and needs of each EU country [...]”⁴⁶

This theory is translated in reality in a situation in which each country is handling the refugee crisis in a different manner and as a consequence, the living conditions offered by each country to the refugees are quite different, leading to a very unequal distribution of asylum applications. As explained along the paper, countries such as Germany and Sweden offer better conditions than the rest, something that is generating waves of thousands of refugees walking through Europe, suffering from hunger and cold just to reach these dreamed countries.

⁴⁵ EUR-Lex (2016). Division of competences within the European Union. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:ai0020>

⁴⁶ EUR-Lex (2016). Justice and home affairs. Available at: http://europa.eu/pol/justice/index_en.htm

So the solution I propose to end with this situation is to establish a common asylum policy that ensures the same asylum standards in all the Member States, trying to offer the same or at least similar assistance and also obliging them to accept a higher number of refugees (always taking into account the variables used for the distribution of quotas: population, GDP, unemployment rate and past number of asylum seekers and of resettled refugees by each country). As shown in Graph 12, the effort made by the Member States in terms of their population is very low, so more effort is possible. As a consequence, I think European authorities should be stricter and impose fines to those countries not showing enough solidarity.

-Offer a safer alternative trip

Another solution to reduce the number of deaths of people crossing the Mediterranean in very dangerous trips is to offer them safer alternative routes.

European authorities should realize that closing both external and internal borders does not stop the inflow of migrants, so this is not the solution. By doing so, what they are achieving is just more tragedies because refugees try to enter through illegal crossings rather than official safer ones. So I think that if we cannot stop them from coming, let's ensure at least that they arrive alive.

This is a proposition in which Amnesty International is already working on. In fact, in September 2015, it launched the petition "Safe passage to protection for refugees in the EU", which was signed by more than 280,000 people. It states that the main solution in order to avoid refugees taking dangerous sea journeys is that "Those seeking asylum should be allowed to enter through official border crossings, regardless of whether or not they have valid travel documents. Countries with external EU borders should keep sufficient, appropriately located, and secure border crossing points open for refugees."⁴⁷

Together with this, goes the idea of offering higher financial and operational support to countries having external borders (mainly Greece and Italy). It is true that the EU authorities are already working on it with Triton and Poseidon Operations, as well as with the European Border and Coast Guard, as I have explained in Point 4. However, I think this is the part where most resources should be invested since it is the crucial point where lives of thousands of people can be saved.

⁴⁷ Amnesty International (8th September 2015). A Union of Protection: Amnesty International's agenda for refugee protection in Europe. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur01/2417/2015/en/>

-Voluntary return

Another solution would be the voluntary return. However, I think that this is still quite difficult at this moment, at least for those refugees coming from Syria. The situation in their home country is still quite dangerous, but according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), “for millions of refugees around the world, going home remains the strongest hope of finding an end to exile.”⁴⁸ Thus, I think that providing them the necessary mechanisms to go back to their countries of origin is also a durable solution. Obviously, I consider that international authorities should continue offering them support and protection once they come back to their countries to ensure that they do not need to come back again escaping from danger.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Along this paper, a review of the socio-economical aspects of the refugee crisis and the role of the European Union in its management has been done.

First of all, data about the dimension of this crisis has been shown, demonstrating that it is the gravest crisis suffered by the European Union: in 2014 asylum applicants reached the highest number in the last 15 years, with a total of 626,000 applications. Besides, the distribution of these applications is very unequal, being Germany and Sweden the countries with the highest number.

Secondly, I have demonstrated that this massive wave of people into the European Union is caused by people escaping from armed conflicts and persecution and not by economic aspects such as GDP differential among countries. This is why those people are not economic migrants but refugees, and as a consequence, they have to be treated taking into account the rights that refugees have. Moreover, data shows that the main country of origin is Syria, confirming that this crisis’ main cause is a war, Syria’s Civil War.

Afterwards, a review of how the European Union has acted during these last months to solve this situation has been done, showing clearly that it has failed. It is the first time that the European Union since it was created, has to confront such a dramatic and grave crisis. It is now when many of the statements that appear in the Treaties of the European Union have to be put into practice. However, was the European Union prepared for this? This research has shown that not really. The European Union has official tools, policies and

⁴⁸ UNHCR (2016). Durable solutions: voluntary repatriation. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cfe.html>

programs that explain how each Member State and the European Union as a whole should act in each situation. However, now that they have to be applied, we can see the weaknesses of this Union.

More precisely, this crisis is showing that the asylum and immigration policies, as well as the border control rules, are not sustainable and that important achievements such as the Schengen Area are being threatened. Moreover, the European Union is failing in complying with the basic common objectives that support the whole system, especially the 2nd and 5th objectives of the Lisbon Treaty. The 2nd objective states that “The Union will guarantee an space of freedom, security and justice without interior frontiers, in which the free circulation of people will be guaranteed together with the suitable measures on external border controls, asylum, immigration and prevention and fight against crime” and the 5th objective, which refers to the external action of the EU, states that the Union will “contribute to the peace, security, sustainable development of the planet, solidarity and respect among societies, free and fair trade, poverty eradication and protection of human rights”.⁴⁹ And it is obvious that most of the points of these objectives are not being achieved. Besides, the EU is also violating many of the human rights of these refugees.

However, I think that the European Union has enough capacity and resources to overcome this crisis and even emerge strengthened with new instruments and tools, which will allow it to confront similar situations more successfully in the near future. As a consequence, in the last two points of this report I have tried to show the main positive effects that this crisis has for the EU and some possible durable solutions.

Regarding the positive aspects of this crisis, it has been mentioned that the lower average age of refugees will help Europe to become rejuvenated, something that is very necessary for the European aged society. Moreover, it has also been demonstrated that most of the refugees coming have superior studies and different skills, something that will help to increase competition and improve the performance of European labour markets. Thus, if the European Union achieves to manage this crisis successfully, all these aspects will allow it to become stronger.

Finally, concerning possible durable solutions, it has been pointed out that this crisis is not going to be solved in the short-run. The European Union needs to develop some long-term strategies such as investing in the development of common asylum and immigration

⁴⁹ Antuano I., Bacaria J., Barberán R., Bataller F., Bonete R., Camarero M., Cuadrado J.R., Egea P., Goerlich F.J., Jaime V., Jordán J., Mancha T., Más M., Pérez F.J., Ramos R., Reig E., Roca A., Sanchis M., Tamarit C.,(2013), *Economía de la Unión Europea*, Pamplona, Navarra, Editorial Aranzadi.

policies, offering alternative safer routes, supporting voluntary returns and the most important and complicated one, cooperating with other international institutions in order to solve the root of the problem: armed conflicts, wars and terrorism taking place in the main countries of origin.

9. EPILOGUE

*I would like to point out that this is an on-going conflict and that it is impossible to include updated information till the last day. Last information included corresponds to January 2016.

I would like to finish this thesis with some quotes that I have read while doing my research that I think that are quite meaningful and help us to remember that we are talking about people suffering and not just about numbers:

“The <<pull-effect>> does not exist, it exists the <<push-effect>>. War, persecution, death” (Amnesty International)

“Refugees are human. This simple fact seems to have been forgotten” (Jones O. 28th August 2015. The Guardian”

“To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity” (Nelson Mandela)

And finally, we should not forget that “All Europeans have been refugees at some point; only a minority does not have a bond with any exodus, displacement, conflict or dictatorship.” (Francesca Friz- Prguda, Head of UNHCR in Spain).

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